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# GROVE. CHAPEL PULPIT.

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FIFTY-TWO  
SERMONS

BY  
THOMAS BRADBURY,

*Minister of Grove Chapel, Camberwell.*

“ I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”—Acts xx. 27.

VOLUME III.



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## PREFACE.

"Change is our portion here !  
Yet midst our changing lot,  
Midst withering flowers and tempests drear,  
There is that changes not ;  
Unchangeable JEHOVAH'S word,  
'I will be with thee,' saith the Lord."

**S**UCH is the experience of every God-sent messenger of peace. He is graciously delivered from that fearful state described by David: "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God" (Psalm lv. 19). He has his changes in body, mind, circumstances, and experiences. These are the means in the hand of God to shut him up to the guidance and guardianship of the Unchangeable. The earthly house, the body, dissolves; but JEHOVAH, the dwelling-place of His people, is eternally the same. The human mind wavers and wanders; "But JEHOVAH is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth" (Job xxiii. 13). Circumstances are ever changing, and the child of God finds himself never long at one stay; but the place and portion provided for him in Christ know nothing of mutability. Experiences vary, while the safety and security of the heir of glory are not affected by them. The God-sent and God-fearing minister of the New Testament is ever witnessing changes among his hearers. Some of these are taken from the evil which surrounded them to the glory which awaited them. Others are seen occupied with Christ, with spiritual and eternal realities, and are changed into His image from glory to glory as of the Lord the Spirit (2 Cor. iv. 18); while others, occupied with self, who were once fulsome in their expressions of attachment to the preacher and his preaching, are changed to murmurers and malcontents. With the experience of this the faithful minister is ready to say with Paul, "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. iv. 15, 16.) Concerning such as these, during the past year, I have no reason to complain. It has been my lot during the delivery of these discourses to have respect to the



tried and tempted, broken-hearted and humble followers of the Lamb, being fully assured that the fleshly free-willer, the proud professor, and the cold critic would find no pleasure in them.

It is my gracious privilege to say with the Psalmist and Paul: "I have believed, and therefore have I spoken" (Psalm cxvi. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 13); and in speaking I have declared all the counsel of God as it has been given to me for the good of His elect; and my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have not kept back anything that was profitable to them (Acts xx. 20 and 27). The glory of the Father in His purposes of love to His people, has been my chief aim. The exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the heart's affections of His redeemed people is my delight. The honour of the blessed Spirit in an unadulterated and undiluted testimony I love to maintain. The comfort and encouragement of the brethren and sisters of my Lord form a great portion of the burden of His Word with me. I have tried to use great plainness of speech and to avoid appearing amongst those of whom it may be truly said, "*so they wrap it up*" (Micah vii. 3). Compromise with a legalised Gospel and a carnalised Christianity is foreign to the spirit which God has graciously given me. Confederacy with "*nice, dear, good men*" who hold errors most pernicious, who love those whom God hates, and hate those whom God loves, is not agreeable to that new nature which God has given me in oneness with an almost universally hated and despised Christ. I am fully conscious that a spirit of separation, though accompanied with a broken heart before God, will be set down as sour and censorious. Well, let it be so. God will be glorified, and He will teach His separated ones to be satisfied with all that He graciously lays upon them.

And now I must say again, "In these discourses I have nothing to offer and no invitations to make. It is mine to preach Christ as I know and feel Him to be precious to my own soul, and to the souls of His eternally-loved and dearly-bought people, begging of the Holy Ghost to do His own work, so well expressed in" those precious words of Joseph Irons,—

" 'Tis by Thy Divine Anointing,  
Ransom'd sinners know the Lord;  
Gospel truths to Jesus pointing,  
Strength, delight, and joy afford,  
When Thine unction  
Rests upon the preach'd Word."

"And now, *readers*, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts xx. 32).

THOMAS BRADBURY.

# CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	iii
<b>SERMONS.</b>	
CV.	
JEHOVAH'S PROCLAMATION . . . . .	1
"And the LORD passed by before him," &c.—Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.	
CVI.	
CHRIST'S BONES . . . . .	13
"All My bones shall say, LORD," &c.—Psa. xxxv. 10.	
CVII.	
COMPARISON AND CONFIRMATION . . . . .	25
"And what one nation in the earth," &c.—2 Sam. vii. 23, 24.	
CVIII.	
THE COMING OF JEHOVAH-JESUS . . . . .	37
"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion," &c.—Zech. ii. 10, 11.	
CIX.	
"THE LORD BLESS THEE" . . . . .	49
"The LORD bless thee, and keep thee," &c.—Num. vi. 24—26.	
CX.	
MY TIMES, NOT MINE, BUT GOD'S . . . . .	61
"My times are in Thy hand."—Psa. xxxi. 15.	
CXI.	
THE DAY—THE SONG—AND THE LAND . . . . .	73
"In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah."—Isa. xxvi. 1.	
CXII.	
RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION REALITIES . . . . .	85
"If ye be risen with Christ," &c.—Col. iii. 1—4.	
CXIII.	
"HE IS ABLE" . . . . .	97
"Believe ye that I am able to do this?"—Matt. ix. 28.	
CXIV.	
PREPARED THINGS FOR A PREPARED PEOPLE . . . . .	109
"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen," &c.—1 Cor. ii. 9.	
CXV.	
REVEALED THINGS FOR A RESERVED REMNANT . . . . .	121
"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit," &c.—1 Cor. ii. 10.	

## CXVI.

- CHRIST'S HEELS** . . . . . 133  
 "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil," &c.—Psa. xlix. 5.

## CXVII.

- RIGHTEOUSNESS** . . . . . 145  
 "Righteousness shall go before Him," &c.—Psa. lxxxv. 13.

## CXVIII.

- CONSECRATED GROUND** . . . . . 157  
 "For where two or three are gathered together," &c.—Matt. xviii. 20.

## CXIX.

- SELECT SOCIETY** . . . . . 173  
 "There am I in the midst of them."—Matt. xviii. 20.

## CXX.

- GARMENTS UNDEFILED** . . . . . 185  
 "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis," &c.—Rev. iii. 4.

## CXXI.

- DIVINE CERTAINTIES PROCLAIMED, ETC.** . . . . . 197  
 "And it shall come to pass in that day," &c.—Isa. xxvii. 13.

## CXXII.

- "A VINEYARD OF RED WINE"** . . . . . 209  
 "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine."—Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.

## CXXIII.

- "LOVERS OF JEHOVAH"** . . . . . 221  
 "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil," &c.—Psa. xcvi. 10.

## CXXIV.

- "THE MASTERS OF ASSEMBLIES"** . . . . . 233  
 "The words of the Wise are as goads," &c.—Eccles. xii. 11.

## CXXV.

- THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE** . . . . . 245  
 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto," &c.—Matt. xiv. 45, 46.

## CXXVI.

- MARAH** . . . . . 257  
 "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink," &c.—Exod. xv. 23—25.

## CXXVII.

- THE LAMB AND HIS COMPANY** . . . . . 269  
 "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion," &c.—Rev. xiv. 1—3.

## CXXVIII.

- REGENERATION, REDEMPTION, RESTRAINT, ETC.** . . . . . 281  
 "These are they which were not defiled with women," &c.—Rev. xiv. 4, 5.

## CXXIX.

- "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE"** . . . . . 293  
 "I AM the Resurrection and the Life."—John xi. 25.

## CXXX.

- "THE PATH OF THE JUST" . . . . . 307  
 "But the path of the just is as the shining light," &c.—Prov. iv. 18.

## CXXXI.

- THE GOD-PLEASER . . . . . 319  
 "When a man's ways please the LORD," &c.—Prov. xvi. 7.

## CXXXII.

- JEHOVAH-JESUS—THE SECURITY OF ZION . . . . . 331  
 "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved," &c.—Psa. xlii. 5.

## CXXXIII.

- LOST IN LOVE . . . . . 343  
 "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" &c.—Song v. 9.

## CXXXIV.

- THE PURITY AND PERFECTION OF CHRIST . . . . . 355  
 "My Beloved is white and ruddy."—Song v. 10

## CXXXV.

- THE CHIEF BELOVED . . . . . 367  
 "The Chiefest among ten thousand."—Song v. 10.

## CXXXVI.

- CHRIST'S HEAD . . . . . 379  
 "His head is as the most fine gold."—Song v. 11.

## CXXXVII.

- CHRIST'S LOCKS . . . . . 391  
 "His locks are bushy and black as a raven."—Song v. 11.

## CXXXVIII.

- CHRIST'S EYES . . . . . 403  
 "His eyes are as the eyes of doves."—Song v. 12.

## CXXXIX.

- CHRIST'S FULNESS . . . . . 415  
 "His eyes are as the eyes of doves," &c.—Song v. 12.

## CXL.

- CHRIST'S CHEEKS . . . . . 427  
 "His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers."—Song v. 13.

## CXLI.

- CHRIST'S LIPS . . . . . 439  
 "His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh."—Song v. 13.

## CXLII.

- CHRIST'S HANDS . . . . . 451  
 "His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl."—Song v. 14.

## CXLIII.

- CHRIST'S HEART . . . . . 463  
 "His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires."—Song v. 14.

## CXLIV.

- CHRIST'S LEGS . . . . . 475  
 "His legs are as pillars of marble," &c.—Song v. 15.

## CXLV.

- CHRIST'S COUNTENANCE . . . . . 487  
 "His countenance is as Lebanon," &c.—Song v. 15.

## CXLVI.

- CHRIST'S MOUTH . . . . . 499  
 "His mouth is most sweet."—Song v. 16.

## CXLVII.

- CHRIST'S LOVELINESS . . . . . 511  
 "Yea, He is altogether lovely."—Song v. 16.

## CXLVIII.

- CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP . . . . . 523  
 "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."—Song v. 16.

## CXLIX.

- ZION'S GATE-KEEPERS . . . . . 535  
 "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation," &c.—Isa. xxvi. 2.

## CL.

- ZION'S GATES . . . . . 547  
 "Open ye the gates," &c.—Isa. xxvi. 2.

## CLI.

- EXPERIMENTAL INUNDATION . . . . . 559  
 "When the enemy shall come in like a flood."—Isa. lix. 19.

## CLII.

- THE SPIRIT AND THE STANDARD . . . . . 571  
 "The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard," &c.—Isa. lix. 19.

## CLIII.

- A NEW CREATION . . . . . 583  
 "Therefore if any man be in Christ," &c.—2 Cor. v. 17.

## CLIV.

- "A CASTAWAY" . . . . . 595  
 "But I keep under my body, and bring it," &c.—1 Cor. ix. 27.

## CLV.

- SOUL TROUBLE . . . . . 607  
 "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say?" &c.—John xii. 27.

## CLVI.

- RIGHT WAYS . . . . . 619  
 "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?" &c.—  
 Hosea xiv. 9.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## JEHOVAH'S PROCLAMATION.

---

### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 1ST, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

---

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

"Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the *guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."—Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.

IN the chapter preceding this from which I have taken my text, and which I read for our instruction this morning, we have an experimental and practical exposition of our last Sunday morning's text—"And grace for grace." I say practical and experimental because the exposition flows forth from the exercised heart and favoured spirit of Moses, the man of God. He was the meekest of all men upon the face of the earth, and yet he was taught in the school of painful experience, that left to himself without the presence and power of his God, he was the very opposite to meekness. In the face of such an experience this highly-favoured saint was brought to that high state of privilege described in the 11th verse: "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Jacob, after the covenant Angel's wrestling, said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. xxxii. 30). And poor faint-hearted "Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God." But here Moses looks God in the face with blessed familiarity and in heartfelt communion. He "said unto the LORD, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people, and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight. Now, therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me



now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight, and consider that this nation is Thy people." In these words we see the infirmity, forgetfulness, and faithlessness of Moses. He said to God, "Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me." Turn to chapter iii. 12. God gave commandment to Moses to bring forth Israel out of Egypt, and added His promise, "Certainly I will be with thee." I, the great and glorious JEHOVAH. The I AM. Thy All in all. All thy salvation from sin. All thy wisdom in thy ignorance. All thy strength in weakness. Moses continued, "Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight." My dear friends, if the Lord were to speak in an audible voice to any of us this morning, saying, Thomas, William, John, or Ann, "I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in My sight," we might come to the conclusion that we should retire from this place the happiest creatures in creation. But that does not always follow. The Lord may speak peace one moment and something else the next. If He gives us to experience His grace, He is sure to send something to test and prove the reality of the grace He has given. It was so with Moses, for he answers God thus: "Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight." Why that "if?" It is recorded to teach some of us that, with all the grace God bestows upon us, we shall have our doubts and fears producing many an *if* in our communications with Him. But does it not seem strange that an *if* should appear here? Moses was at that very moment a recipient and possessor of grace bestowed, evidenced in the very fact that JEHOVAH was then speaking with him as a man speaketh unto his friend. Yet in the face of such magnanimous grace the entreaty of the recipient is heard—"If I have found grace in Thy sight, *show me now Thy way.*" I like that. It is not, "Show me now *my* way," but "Show me now *Thy way, that I may know Thee.*" Is there anything to find fault with there? Not at all. It is only in keeping with the experience of the apostle Paul, and, to my mind, is a silencer to high-flying professors who talk much about a stock of grace in hand. Such persons might say Moses lived amid the darkness of the old covenant dispensation, and uses old covenant terms. Well, if so, we shall find old covenant terms in Phil. iii. 10: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." Did not Paul know Him? Judging according to our weak apprehension, we should say that no man, since the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, knew Him better than Paul. Yet, with all his knowledge, he felt as though he knew but little, and thirsted for more. "That I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight." He did not boast in the possession of a stock of grace, but took the grace received as a plea for still more

gracious supplies. "And consider that this nation is Thy people. And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me carry us not up hence." Moses believed in a carrying God, and so do I, thoroughly. You may depend upon it, if I did not believe in a carrying God, you would not see me in the spot I now occupy. O, what a mercy to experience a gracious lift, a covenant upholding in the arms of JEHOVAH-JESUS! This is to enjoy the embracings of everlasting love, and to repose in the sweetness of these precious words—

"The object of that love I am,  
And carried like a child."

Ofttimes we are carried when we are not conscious of the fact. What does a child know of the love of the parent's heart when carried to rest at night? But we must go on. Moses says: "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight?" Now, do you know, that is a question frequently arising in my mind before my God, in reference to Grove chapel and its people. "*Wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight?*" Some have prayed that the chapel might be crowded, but such forget that a crowded chapel is not always an evidence of spiritual prosperity. There may be in a crowd a profusion of hypocrites and mere professors, who come in just to hang upon the lips of a man, to fill their heads with notions, opinions, and views, whilst their hearts are destitute of the humbling grace of God. God's Gospel is not only to gather together the poor and afflicted, but it is also to scatter the rich and conceited. But let us look at the prayer and the importunity—"Wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us?" That is it. Lord, go with me into those spots of retirement, where none but Thyself and the devil can ever know the secret struggles and groans of Thy servant. Lord, go with me into that pulpit; may self be excluded, Thyself glorified, Thy Christ exalted, Thy Spirit honoured, and Thy grace be experienced in the hearts of Thy people. May Thy presence go with us, and may Thine electing, redeeming, justifying, and preserving grace and glory be richly enjoyed in our midst. "Is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." Oh, my dear friends, may God keep you from being afraid of separation, if it distinguishes you from all but the Lord's own people. See! it is not simply separation from Papists, Socinians, and Arminians, but from those who have been well styled Mongrel Calvinists, who will bring in a little of *their own responsibility* to mar the beauty of God's free and *uninfluenced* grace. Yes, God's children, whom He has experi

mentally separated to Himself, are like the Shunamite who sought not after worldly preferment and pleasure; but when these were thrown in her way, so wisely said: "*I dwell among mine own people.*" I love to dwell among *an elect people*, whose election is known and felt by the presence of God in their midst. I love to dwell among *a redeemed people*, whose redemption is seen in their acts, their words, their looks, and their sympathies. I love to dwell among *a regenerated people*, whose regeneration is manifest in their delight to sit in heavenly places, holding communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I love to dwell with *a scattered and peeled people*, whose hopes have been scattered, and the skin of their fleshly legality peeled from them, that nought but the soothing and mollifying power of Christ's blood will ease their wounded spirits. I love to dwell among *a poor and afflicted people*, so poor as not to produce a grain of faith, a spark of life, a ray of light, a beam of hope, or a single good word or thought. With these I can bow very low at the footstool of sovereign mercy, sighing, "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." These are the people whom my soul loves. "And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." Did he know for what he was asking? You may depend upon it, sometimes God's poor children ask Him for things they are not quite sure about. We ask and it pleases Him to give, and with the gift to send leanness into our souls. We ask and He bestows, and when we are in possession of the desired blessing, the testing is so terrible that we almost wish we had never asked. Here Moses asks God, "Show me Thy glory. And God said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee." Now you see something of the glory of the LORD revealed in His sovereignty and independence, doing as He will in His work of salvation, revealing Himself to whom He will, and giving no account of His matters. "And will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And He said, Thou canst not see My face, for there shall no man see Me and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock." Look here, trembling sinner. Was it ever thy lot to stand in that place by thy God? See! It is new covenant ground. It is the place of His feet which He has made glorious with covenant provision and supply. It is the place sprinkled with atoning blood. It is the place prepared with justifying righteousness. It is the place of resurrection-power and privilege. "And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock." What is this rock? Turn to Isa. xxvi. 4: "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength" (margin, *the Rock of Ages*). You see, Moses should

not only have a firm footing for his faith *on* the Rock, but also an immunity from his fears *in* the clift of the Rock. With such gracious covenant provision in possession we may well sing—

“ Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee ;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

“ And will cover thee with My hand while I pass by.” Oh ! what a marvellous mercy for the hand of a covenant God to be over His poor, tried, and troubled children. Turn to Zech. xiii. 7 : “ Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of hosts : smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered : and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones.” There you have the Rock of refuge, the Clift of mercy, and the Hand of covenant blessing. That Hand shades them from the power of His glory which would otherwise sweep them into nothingness. But as this glory is revealed in the person and work of the God-Man, they are blessed with the gracious privilege of holding fellowship with the Three-in-One JEHOVAH. “ And I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts.” What does He mean by this ? He means that He will reveal to him all that can be known, understood, or apprehended of Himself in the person of the God-Man Christ Jesus, or that this revelation of Himself should be the earnest of after or future displays of His glorious grace. Absolute or abstract Deity can never be known by mortal, and it is only as He is pleased to reveal Himself through the sinless humanity of His own dear Son, that elect sinners can be taken into union with Himself, or hold sweet communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In the nineteenth verse God says : “ I will make all My goodness pass before thee.” *All* My goodness, not *some* of it. All the goodness I have treasured up for thee in the covenant of grace. All the goodness needful for thee during thy sojourn in the wilderness, and in thy conduct to the home of My glory. I will bless thee with a revelation of My glorious sovereignty in the salvation and succour of whom I will, and sympathising with them in all their sorrow and distress. We now come to notice chapter xxxiv. 5 : “ And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.” “ The LORD *descended*.” In every revelation and interposition of JEHOVAH, He must either descend to the position of His people or they must ascend to Him. Sometimes He is pleased to descend to them, and sometimes He is pleased to give them a gracious lift up to Himself as the God of all grace. Wherever they are visited with sweet indications of His presence, they are favoured and blessed indeed. If I am

passing through the floods of temptation or through the fires of affliction, His gracious promise having been given must be fulfilled in my heart's experience: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. xliii. 2). What have I to fear if He is pleased to reveal Himself to me in the very heights of covenant favour, or in the lowlands of suffering and of sorrow? The fulfilment of His promise is a blessing indeed. But listen!

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

I.—Notice the name by which He is pleased to proclaim His goodness to Moses: "The LORD." This is His glorious name which cannot be communicated to created beings whatever be their state or condition, sinful ones in the shape of poor fallen humanity here below, or sinless ones, those bright and glorious intelligencies who surround His throne, and who are blessed with that appellation given to them by Paul: "The Elect Angels" (1 Tim. v. 21). There can be no communication of the great and glorious name of JEHOVAH to them or to us. What is its meaning? Self-existent. Can you comprehend it? It is that self-existent, independent One so precious set forth in that first hymn by Joseph Irons:—

"Aspire, my soul, to yonder throne,  
Where sits the Infinite Unknown,  
The self-existent God;  
Whose being, no beginning knows,  
While matchless splendour round Him flows,  
And all things wait His nod.

'Tis His to fill immensity;  
No object can escape His eye,  
Nor thought His mind elude;  
All things were by His wisdom plann'd;  
All are supported by His hand;  
And all at once are viewed.

Justice and mercy, truth and love,  
Shine from His glorious throne above,  
As Israel's covenant God;  
In Persons Three—in essence One—  
He is the Sovereign LORD alone,  
And be His name adored.

With Him is no futurity;  
He stands enwrap'd in purity;  
Unchangeably The Same:  
The Great First Cause of all events,  
He gives decrees, and ne'er repents;  
And HOLY is His name."

Exception has been taken to that line,—

“Where sits the Infinite Unknown.”

One said to me: “It is too much like the inscription on the heathen altar at Athens: ‘TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.’” “My dear fellow,” said I, “there is no affinity between the two. In the words of the hymn, the master-mind of the now glorified Joseph Irons sounds forth the praises of Him ‘Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see.’ JEHOVAH in His own entity. Existing not by virtue of the existence of any created being, yet revealing Himself to His elect in the sovereignty of His will by Jesus Christ.” But it is ours to adore Him not only as the self-existent One, but also in His glorious sovereignty. The name JEHOVAH denotes this. He acts according to the counsel of His own will—a will in which He sought the advice and counsel of none. He disposes of men, angels, devils, things, circumstances, and influences according to His own infinite and unerring wisdom. He reigns over the whole earth, and holds in derision all the opposers of His will, and laughs to scorn all His enemies who call into question His sovereign and independent right to dispense His favours as He will in the son of His love. As JEHOVAH. He is the OMNISCIENT. Nothing can escape His vision, knowledge, or understanding. He is the OMNIPRESENT. Read for yourselves the first part of Psalm cxxxix. I thank God I learned it when I was a lad. See: “Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there.” Depend upon this, as JEHOVAH is the source of all the bliss and blessedness of the glorified in heaven, so He is the terror of all the damned in hell. This is an awful and terrible subject, which I desire not to dwell upon; but I find it in my Bible, and have felt some of its horrors in my heart’s experience, so I must declare it. I know there are some sugar-coated creatures, and would-be philanthropists, who would have us believe that God is too loving for all this; but these forget to consider the strange mysteries of His every-day providence. These, through blind unbelief, imagine that God is too loving to allow suffering in hell, and yet they see how it exists in asylums where madmen are raving, in hospitals where patients are agonising, and in distant lands where barbarities unmentionable are perpetrated. These still further forget, and here I must say, not being a universal charity man, I have not a particle of charity for these despisers of the Word whom God will destroy (Prov. xiii. 13), when I think of Him, who is my only Hope of escaping JEHOVAH’S wrath and indignation, leaving the bosom of the Father for the belly of hell, the acclamation of angels for the rage of devils, the delight of His Father for the



bloody sweat of Gethsemane, the joy of God's countenance for the desertion on Calvary, when He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" As we contemplate this, we must stand in awe at the sovereignty of God as displayed in all His doings, and what He doeth shall stand for ever, whatever infidels, sceptics, and mere professors may say to the contrary. "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." The Psalmist might well say: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." But, blessed be God, according to the subsequent portion of the Psalm, that which God had ordained for His children, and they, because of their ignorance and inability, could not attain unto, He, in covenant and incarnation, has descended to for all the members of the one body. Here we see JEHOVAH, the incommunicable, communicating with His people.

**JEHOVAH-GOD!** Yes, there must be a communication of all contained in covenant connection with that name to His own; yes, of all that He has made Himself to them. Therefore we find here and there words of qualification or explanation added to this name. Look at a few.

**JEHOVAH-JIREH**, who will supply all my need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Gen. xxii. 14; Phil. iv. 19).

**JEHOVAH-ROPHI**, who healeth all my diseases (Exod. xv. 26; Psalm ciii. 3).

**JEHOVAH-NISSI**, who covereth my head in the day of battle (Exod. xvii. 15; Psalm cxl. 7).

**JEHOVAH-SHALOM**, who is my peace in tribulation (Judges vi. 24; John xvi. 33).

**JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU**, the LORD my righteousness (Jer. xxiii. 6, xxxiii. 16).

**JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH**, who will be with His people in all places and at all times (Ezekiel xlvi. 35; Gen. xxviii. 15).

**JEHOVAH-GOD.** God is the old Anglo-Saxon word for good. God is good, and goodness is His nature. Goodness is not a mere attribute of Deity, but the expression of His nature to His covenant people. The Father's goodness is revealed in the Son of His love by the grace and indwelling of His good Spirit. Goodness is God going forth in covenant transactions. The Father blessing His people, the Son saving His people, the Holy Ghost regenerating, reviving, and restoring His people. The Father is good; the Son is good; the Holy Ghost is good. These Three are good in one undivided essence, will, and work. God is found by His own in every pleasure and in every pain; in every friend and in every enemy; in every sorrow and in

every joy; in every trial and in every deliverance. But we must pass on.

"*Merciful and gracious.*" What is mercy? Mercy is God's covenant favour shown to elect but miserable sinners. Where there is no misery, there can be no mercy. If you know not what it is to be miserable on account of sin, unbelief, and Satan's temptations, you must be destitute of an experimental acquaintance with God's covenant mercy; but brought to experience it as a sovereign favour from Him who will show mercy on whom He will show mercy, and whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, you will gladly join with Toplady and sing,

"A debtor to mercy alone,  
Of covenant mercy I sing,  
Nor fear with Thy righteousness on,  
My person and offerings to bring;  
The terrors of law and of God  
With me can have nothing to do;  
My Saviour's obedience and blood  
Hide all my transgressions from view."

God's mercy is not only in the covenant, but flows from it in streams of redeeming love and blood. In His redeeming mercy He brings me from the hug of the devil, from his slavish chains, from the pit wherein is no water of life, love, or grace. But JEHOVAH is also *gracious*. What are we to understand by this term? When we hear of one person being gracious to another, if we have a right apprehension of the term, we know that the gracious person was not called upon to notice the one upon whom his kind attentions have been bestowed. God gracious, is the revealing of His love to unworthy, undeserving, and hell-deserving objects. Many talk of grace who know nothing of their unworthiness, and who laugh to scorn as a vain idea the right of God to punish the wicked at all. But we, who have been brought to tremble at the thought of His wrath, through a true apprehension of what sin is, and some sweet realisation of His pardoning and forgiving love, can sometimes sing—

"Oh, to grace how great a debtor,  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee."

*Long-suffering.* Precious fact! "He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any *one of us* should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter iii. 9). God is so long-suffering toward His own that His anger never reaches or overtakes them. He bears with their rebellious and perverse manners in the wilderness, and though they sin against Him, wander from Him, and forget Him altogether, yet He is silent in His love, and neither crushes nor curses them. Nay, for their sake, His judgments against the world slumber, for while an elect vessel of mercy is found amid any moral desolation of this

evil world, He stays the rod of His wrath and the fire of His indignation from devouring His adversaries in one common ruin. You see this in the case of Lot. God was determined to destroy the guilty cities of the plain, but not while Lot lingered there. He hurries His righteous servant out of the doomed spot, saying, "Haste thee, escape thither, *for I cannot do anything* till thou be come thither" (Gen. xix. 22). "The same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke xvii. 29). Look at His long-suffering as described in that precious Scripture, Isa. xxx. 18: "And therefore will the LORD wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you; for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him."

"My God, and did'st Thou wait for me,  
To manifest Thy love?  
Henceforth my soul shall wait for Thee,  
To see Thy face above."

"*Abundant in goodness and truth.*" Look at the latter, "abundant in truth." JEHOVAH is "a God of truth" (Deut. xxxii. 4). The Son speaks of Himself as "The Truth" (John xiv. 6). The Holy Ghost is called "The Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 17). The Gospel is styled "The Word of the truth of the Gospel" (Col. i. 5). Christ said of the Spirit, "He will guide you into all truth" (John xvi. 13). For many years I was puzzled beyond measure how to understand this. I thought, here is one Scripture declaring that the world itself could not contain the books that should be written concerning the truth" (John xxi. 25), and here I see the promise of Jesus that I, a poor weak mortal, shall be guided into *all truth*. This was a mystery that I could not solve, until the Spirit opened my eyes to the fact that it is *all truth* designed for me to know, and into the knowledge of which I must be surely brought; *all truth* necessary to preserve me from the wiles of the devil; *all truth* necessary for my spiritual education. There is "abundance" of truth in JEHOVAH-JESUS to be communicated by the Spirit of truth in the set time of favour, causing the soul to rejoice in the enjoyment of the fulfilment of that promise, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32).

"*Keeping mercy for thousands.*" He does not say for everybody, or for the great mass of mankind. Oh, no! but "*for thousands.*" The Master said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. vii. 14). The tried and tempted pilgrim knows and feels this, and would often cling to it to the ignoring of the words before us: "*keeping mercy for thousands.*" Elijah felt his isolation so much as to say to God: "Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, and digged down Thine altars; and I am left alone,

and they seek my life." But what saith the answer of God to him? "*I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal*" (Rom. xi. 3, 4). Those of us who are acquainted with God's blessed Word, know that the experience of Elijah was not peculiar to himself. It is the experience of the Church in every dispensation. Turn to Psalm cxlii. 4, where you see the isolation of the Man of sorrows, and of all the sorrowful ones in union with Him: "I looked on My right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know Me; refuge failed Me; no man cared for My soul." Read the history of Paul, and you will see that, possessed of all the light and grace with which God had blessed him, he was brought to the same spot of loneliness with his God. He could say, "All men forsook me" (2 Tim. iv. 16). When we look at this great London—might I not say, This great Babylon of ours?—judging after the sight of our eyes, we might truly say, "Few are chosen;" but we cannot tell where God's hidden ones are. The other morning I received a letter from a poor old pauper in Marylebone Workhouse—should I not rather say, a prince in a poorhouse? Could our mental vision be so strengthened, we should see highly-favoured ones in prison cells, in hospital wards, in lonely chambers, in garrets and cellars. We would have them crowding to church, chapel, and meeting-house, but our God will have His own where He will, and it is a marvellous mercy by the sweet constrainings of the Spirit to say Amen to this. When the grand finale takes place, and the whole election of grace whose names are in the Lamb's book of life are gathered together in one, then we shall see a multitude which no man can number. "The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Rev. v. 11).

Some of us have experienced the tender mercy of our God and lost the felt possession of the same again and again, though in fact we can never lose it. He keeps and holds it for us in the midst of all our sins, follies, and imperfections. He will keep it, and neither hell, devils, sins, corruptions, doubts, fears, accursed unbelief, nor all combined can sever a soul from His loved embrace, or debar a child from the enjoyment of that which He keeps for it. This reminds me of an incident I have somewhere read. A prince presents to a subject a ring, the possession of which was the token, pledge, and security of his unchanging affection and regard. He leaves it to the judgment of the subject as to who should hold, keep, and preserve the ring. The subject longs for it, and is entrusted with it; but during his voyage over the ocean of life he loses his hold, and down it falls to the depths beneath. He meets his prince, who desires the production of the token of love. Confusion of face is the lot of the subject, when, to his astonishment, the prince produces the lost treasure. Blessed be God, He holds the waters in the hollow of His hand,

the very place where He holds His saints and the mercy kept for them.

*"Forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."* Is there any difference here? Yes. Look at Psa. xxxii. 1, 2. Transgression forgiven. Sin covered. Iniquity not imputed. Eve *transgressed*, being deceived. Adam *sinned* with his eyes wide open. Out of love to his wife, and want of love to his God, he sinned. *Iniquity!* What is it? It is sin, arising from the enmity of the carnal mind and the deceitfulness of the devil. The slime of the serpent is always seen in it. Yet, whatever be the kind or degree of sin a child of God may fall into, the Father has forgiveness for it. One sins, and is scarcely sensible of it—there is forgiveness for him. Another sins, with aggravated guilt—there is forgiveness for him. Another sins, in foul succession, like David, and appears almost beyond the reach of covenant love, but not so. God, through His servant Nathan, draws out the confession, "I have sinned against the LORD," and blesses him with the gracious communication, "The LORD hath put away thy sin."

*"That will by no means clear the guilty."* God is holy; He cannot pass by sin. He is just; He cannot regard it with impunity. Sin must meet with its desert, either in the person of the principal or the Surety. See! All out of Christ, left without remedy, must meet and bear the due desert of their transgressions, sins, and iniquities, while all in Christ are set free through the agonies and sufferings of their Surety on Calvary's hill. Now we come to the terrible part of the proclamation, and may God graciously speak a word of counsel to fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, and children now present.

*"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."* The Psalmist prayed for an immunity from this—"O remember not against us *the iniquities of them that were before us*" (Psa. lxxix. 8, margin). We see it bursting out in hereditary diseases. We behold it in the transmission of evil dispositions from father to child. Am I a father? O God, cause me to act as a gracious one in the presence of my children. Am I a husband? O, Thou Husband of Thy Church, teach me to love my wife, and be not bitter against her. Art thou a wife? May the Lord teach thee to be obedient to thy husband in Him. Whatever be our relationship, may it be sweetened by the mercy which He keeps for His own, and graciously communicates to them by the power of His own blessed Spirit.

May He add His blessing, for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S BONES.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 8TH, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"All My bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto Thee, which delivereth the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?"—Psalm xxxv. 10.

CHRIST is the sum and substance of the book of Psalms in which these precious words appear. Without Christ in the Psalms, they are no Psalms for us who have been brought into the enjoyment of His love. All is profitless without a sight of a greater than David, even God's well-beloved Son, His First Elect, in whom His soul delighteth (Isaiah xlii. 1). The natural mind may see David, the sweet psalmist of Israel; but the spiritual mind loves to hear the voice of the Psalmist of God's Israel, without whom songs of rejoicing will not be heard in the tabernacles of the righteous. Look at the 18th verse: "I will give Thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise Thee among much people." This is referred to, along with Psalm xxii. 22, by Paul in Heb. ii. 12, to show forth the excellencies of Christ as the Minister of the sanctuary, the Conductor of the liturgies of His people, and the Leader of the praises of His elect and worshipping brethren. Without a sight of the Man of sorrows in the Psalms, those who are brought to experience a multiplication of their sorrows can find no comfort or consolation therein. Without an apprehension of the presence of the Great High Priest of His Church, the spiritual worshippers in the spiritual temple find no introduction to, or acceptance with, the Father. Without the revelation of the Brother born for adversity in these songs of pilgrimage, the tried and tempted children of God find neither succour nor sympathy in them. But it is the lot of all those who are blessed with "the spirit of wisdom and



revelation for the acknowledgment of Him," to seek for Him in every portion of the Word, and to find Him where heady professors know Him not. These see the Christ of God, in whom the Father's affections are fixed with unceasing and ineffable delight, and through whom JEHOVAH'S exceeding delight is communicated to all those in grace union with Himself.

It is our mercy to know the preciousness of that terse saying of our dear friend and brother Gowing's, "*I know of no Christ apart from the Church, and I know of no Church apart from Christ.*" Christ the Head (Col. i. 18), and Christ the members (1 Cor. xii. 12), form one glorious Church. In the mind, view, and will of the Father, Christ and His Church appear as one glorious whole. In the language of the text the Head speaks for all the members, and if the voice of the Beloved be not heard therein, all is mysterious and meaningless. After interceding for His safety and that of the whole Church, and for the confusion of all their enemies, He looks up, and declares, "And My soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in His salvation." A salvation perfect and complete, to be experimentally realised by all His people. He then looks from Himself to them, and in the language of assurance, without wavering or hesitancy, says, "All My bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto Thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for Him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?" We will consider—

I.—THE FRAMEWORK OF CHRIST'S BODY—"All My bones shall say."

II.—THEIR GLORIOUS CHALLENGE AND COMPARISON—"LORD who is like unto Thee?"

III.—THE REASON FOR THIS CHALLENGE—"Which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him."

I.—THE FRAMEWORK OF CHRIST'S BODY—"All My bones shall say." This is the language of assurance, the declaration of the great and glorious Head concerning His body, the Church. Who are the bones of the Lord Jesus Christ? They are the members of His mystical or spiritual body. Can this be found in the clear, unmistakable language of Divine inspiration? Yes, they can be found and delighted in by the spiritual mind as led and guided by God the ever-blessed Spirit into the right understanding of God's truth. In this book of Psalms we have wonderful, and to the natural man, mysterious language declaring the formation, not only of the real humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, but of His spiritual body in the womb of the Divine purposes of grace. Turn with me to Psalm cxxxix. 13—16. After a description of the omniscience and omnipresence of JEHOVAH, a greater than David says, "For Thou hast possessed My reins"—that is, Thou art in possession of all My thoughts of love to My people, My purposes of grace to Thy

chosen, My affectionate desires to My bride, My determinations of compassion to My brethren. "Thou hast covered Me in My mother's womb. I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Thy works; and that My soul knoweth right well. My substance (*strength or body, margin*) was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." Look at these words in reference to the human body of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have endeavoured many times to show you how these words have their explanation in the chaste language of the Te Deum of England's Church, "When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb." There, in the lowest parts of the earth, the sinless, spotless, immaculate, and impeccable body of the Lord Jesus Christ was formed. But notice those words, "*curiously wrought*." In the mind, view, and vision of JEHOVAH the whole of the mystical body of Christ was seen and brought from the lowest parts of the earth, ay, from the very dregs of society. It is not mine now to dwell upon this, though I might direct your attention to the thief upon the cross, to that walking hell, Mary Magdalene, to the murderer Manasseh, and to the harlot Rahab on the walls of Jericho. In such low spots of the earth as these, the various members of the one body are found, and brought to fill their place in the glorious framework of the Father's grace. We will proceed: "Thine eyes did see My substance, yet being unperfect." Mark well that word, "*unperfect*," not imperfect. No imperfection in JEHOVAH'S work. We who worship within these walls can see imperfection in every purpose and act of the God of the Arminian, but it is our blessed privilege to reverence and adore Him of whom Moses could sing, "He is the Rock, His work is perfect" (Deut. xxxii. 4). "Yet being unperfect." In every movement of God in the building up of the body of Christ, perfection is seen, but not that complete perfection, the glorious perfection of the whole as it shall appear before JEHOVAH at last. "And in Thy book all My members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Just look at the marginal reading to this verse, "*what days they should be fashioned*." The fashioning and forming of every member of the mystical or spiritual body of the Lord Jesus Christ occurs in the exact time stated in the Father's perfect plan and unerring purpose. He knew the days we should be quickened from a death in trespasses and sins, and be brought as suppliants to His feet to experience the mercy flowing through the wounds and blood of Jesus Christ His Son. "*What days they should be fashioned*, when as yet there was none of them." This cannot allude to David's natural body, which was formed in one day; but to the various members of the body, the Church, formed according to the days set down in the eternal time-table, even "the purpose of Him who

worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. i. 11).

But now the question arises, Can we find any portion of the New Testament which bears out this view of the text? Certainly! The chapter which I read for our instruction and edification (1 Cor. xii.) shows forth the union of the Head and the members as one body. Look at the 12th verse: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." See! This is not Christ personal, but Christ mystical. It is not Christ in His isolation, working out the salvation of His people; but Christ in identification with His people causing them to enjoy the blessings of His salvation. Christ in union with His own in every act of His life, in every look of His eyes, in every word of His lips, in every thought of His heart. No separation, no schism can be found in the perfect body of Christ. Now read from the 18th to the 27th verses inclusive: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble are necessary. And these members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body: but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Now turn to Rom. xii. 4, 5, where the apostle is enjoining mutual subjection among the members of the Church of Christ. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Now look at Eph. v. 30, where you find this remarkable expression, "For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Language cannot be plainer. The elect, redeemed, and regenerate people of God are thus set before us as the members or bones in the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now take a glance at the persons who are spoken of as the bones of Christ, as they stand before God in their relationship to Adam the first. Mark well the influences affecting them, the motives actuating them, and the perverse will which carries them away from the word, will, purpose, and pleasure of JEHOVAH. Naturally there are murmurers, complainers,

repiners—ever finding fault with the position and place assigned to them in the predestinating purpose of God. According to the carnal mind, God always puts every child of His in the wrong place. If you will only consult your natural feelings for a moment or two, you will find it is so. I tell you honestly and candidly, I cannot find within the whole range of my acquaintance a single star held in the hand of the King-Priest, which, according to its own judgment, is shining in the right place. There is some fleshly reason why it should seek for some other sphere of labour, more useful or more extended. But, my dear friends, look here! “It hath pleased Him” to place the feet nearest to the ground, coming most in contact with the dirt, and filth, and mud, and mire of the wilderness. “It hath pleased Him” to place the hand in the position it occupies. The hand to work. The feet to walk. The eye to discern. The head to know. The weary feet may find fault with the quiet member it carries hither and thither, while the quiet or passive member may experience far more weariness. You may rest assured that the person who obtains his food by the sweat of his brow mentally, would oftentimes gladly exchange places with many of the workers and walkers, but he cannot, for he fills just that spot assigned to him in the never-failing purpose of God. The Head—that is, the great and glorious Head representing the whole body up yonder—cannot say to a single member, however weak, uncomely, or contemptible that member may appear, “I have no need of thee.” We see from these various portions of God’s most Holy Word that the elect of God, the redeemed of God, the regenerate children of God, are so many members in that one body which derives all its nourishment, strength, wisdom, influence, and motion from Christ its Head.

Now turn to Eph. i. 22, 23: “And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” The body of Christ is the fulness of JEHOVAH. Now look at chap. ii. 21, where the Church is represented as a building, “In whom (that is, Christ) all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” There we see the framing and the building together of the body of Christ for a habitation of God through the Spirit. The members, or bones of the one body, must be brought together in God’s own good time. What are the means God has ordained to this end? See Eph. iv. 4—16: “There is one body.” Notice the Framers of the body: One Spirit, one Lord, one Father. Then notice the supports of the body: One hope, one faith, one baptism. Now read the 7th verse: “But unto every one of us.” Who are you? The members of this one body. “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led

captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lowest parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints." What is that? It means *for the knitting together of the saints*, the knitting together of the members, the bones, or the framework of the body. "For the work of the ministry, for the *building up* of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." You see the apostle does not lay down any rule, regulation, law, or experience to which the children of God must ascend or descend. He shows that God's perfection is His own Christ, and to that perfection He will bring all His children. Our peace and satisfaction will never rest upon the measure of our feelings, faith, repentance, or experience, though we would not part with any of these; but upon God's Christ revealed in our hearts by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. We pass on to the 15th verse: "But speaking the truth in love, ~~may~~ grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Here we see who are the bones of Christ. They are the elect of God, redeemed by Christ and regenerated by the Holy Ghost. They are the children who are partakers of flesh and blood, of which Christ took part. They are the spiritual brethren of Christ, the many sons of God whom He is bringing to glory. These are the bones of Christ.

"How precious that truth to my soul,  
That Christ and His people are One;  
He, the life-giving Head to the whole,  
They, members, e'en bone of His bone."

There may be some ready to say, Such truths are higher than I have ever reached. Well, we will try to meet your case Scripturally and experimentally. The bones of Christ are represented in different phases of spiritual experience in various portions of God's Word. Turn to Psalm vi. 2: "Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal Me; *for My bones are vexed.*" Of whom does David speak? of himself, or of some other man? It is of another Man he speaks, even of the Man Christ Jesus. He is speaking here of the varied members of the one body, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the living and glorified Head. The bones of Christ, the elect of God, the redeemed members of Christ, vexed? Yes. Vexed

day by day, and moment by moment, by the buffetings of Satan, the surgings of iniquity, corruption, and depravity which dwell within. Vexed with the accursed and blasphemous insinuations and injections of Satan, and still more with the pride, conceit, and lust which oftentimes have the ascendancy in the experience of the child of God, bringing him into a state of utter self-despair. We who are alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, know full well that this is all true. Look now at Psalm xxii. 14. This Psalm is full of the redeeming work, and suretyship sufferings of our Lord. "I am poured out like water, and *all My bones are out of joint*;" or, as you read in the margin, *sundered*. You know that feelingly this is often the case. Where is the communion of saints? Where is the fellowship of the brethren? Where is the unity of the Spirit? Where is the bond of peace? Where is there the esteeming of each other better than one's self? Where is there the meeting for mingling of gracious souls before the throne of grace? The Master suffered the pangs of isolation, and here He speaks for Himself, in the midst of His suretyship sufferings, and also for His members in experimental union with Him. Now come with me to Psalm xxxi. 10: "For My life is spent with grief, and My years with sighing: My strength faileth because of Mine iniquity, and *My bones are consumed*." Can that be the language of the Lord Jesus Christ? Had He iniquity? Yes, but not iniquity committed by Him. It was iniquity imputed to, and borne by, Him, according to Isaiah liii. 6: "The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," the power and curse of which He experienced as the Sin-bearer of His people while here upon earth. But look at that terrible state known only by those in grace union with Himself, "*My bones are consumed*." Frequently we find ourselves consumed with the fires of fleshly determination and desire. James knew something of this, when, writing to the scattered tribes, he said, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume upon your lusts" (James iv. 3). This he wrote, not to the reprobate or unregenerate, but to the tried and tempted children of God. Every living soul, sensible of his own corruptions, must acknowledge the truth of this. Come with me to Psalm xxxii. 3: "When I kept silence, *My bones waxed old* through My roaring all the day long." About the most difficult thing for a child of God to do is to keep silence in the face of provocation, under oppression, and while enduring temptation. He longs to meet with some one to whom he can communicate his grief, with whom he can hold a little fellowship, and from whom he can draw a little sympathy. So weak and foolish is he, that he will seek the company of those, who, as foolish as himself, will encourage him in his outpourings of self-pity. This is the most unenviable state that a poor child of God can be brought into. But mark! "Himself took our infirmities, and

bare our sicknesses" (Matt. viii. 17). These all borne by the great and glorious Head for the present and everlasting good of all His members. But see! "My bones waxed old through My roaring." Strange! Silent, yet roaring. You may depend upon it, that much roaring ascends to the ears of God when there is no articulation. Read Psalm xxxviii. 3, 4: "There is no soundness in My flesh because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in My bones because of My sin. For Mine iniquities are gone over My head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for Me." Now come to that redemption Psalm, cii. 3: "For My days are consumed like smoke, and *My bones are burned as an hearth.*" All this is experienced by the children of the living God when they are left to themselves awhile, and know of no communication from Him or with Him—left without any manifestation of His mercy, without any revelation of His love, without any outpouring or inpouring of His grace. It is ours now to pass away from this painful part of the subject. It is painful even as we know it in the light of Eph. iv. 12: "The perfecting—or *knitting together*—of the saints." You may rest assured there can be no knitting together of disjointed members without pain on the part of those who experience the same. But let us now consider—

II.—THEIR GLORIOUS CHALLENGE AND COMPARISON—"LORD, who is like unto Thee?" "All My bones," all those who have been out of joint, all those who have been consumed, all those who have been vexed, all those who have been burned as a hearth, all those who are knit together, shall say, "LORD, who is like unto Thee?" See! All these bones acknowledge a covenant God in Christ. As we look at this in the light of covenant relationship, all the bones of Christ shall own Him, JEHOVAH. What does this teach you and me? It teaches us, and I wish to speak calmly and deliberately, that the Socinian who styles himself a Christian, or the Unitarian who will take to himself the name of Christian, has a lie on his lips in the sight of God. Yes, God sees the word LIAR stamped upon his forehead. Look! "All My bones shall say JEHOVAH." Every member of the mystical body of Christ shall own that He is JEHOVAH. Without the Godhead of Christ, where is there a particle of hope for any member of His body? Without the Lordship of Christ, where is the security of His subjects? Without the Divinity of Jesus, where is the redemption of His people? Without the Deity of Emmanuel, where is the hope, comfort, or consolation of Israel? Take away the name and nature of JEHOVAH from our Lord Jesus Christ, and you take away the keystone from the arch of Divine revelation, you sap and mine the very foundation of the Christian faith, and you leave the children of God nothing but shifting sand to stand upon. "All My bones shall say JEHOVAH." All of them? Yes. If you will search God's Book from Abraham's days to John, you will

find all the bones agreed upon this matter. Abraham saw Him as the great I AM. Listen to Jesus' words! "Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw, and was glad. Before Abraham was, I AM" (John viii. 56—58). Oh, say some, Abraham saw Christ in the future; but I say, Abraham, by gracious and spiritual revelation, saw JEHOVAH-JESUS with him to deliver him out of all his temptations, and to bless him with the rich realisation of His covenant love. Look through the book of Psalms, and there you see Him at every step as JAH, JEHOVAH, LORD. Come to the prophecies of Isaiah. In the 6th chapter, the glory of the LORD JESUS was revealed to Isaiah (see John xii. 39—41). In Isaiah l. 4 we hear JEHOVAH speaking to His Church: "The Lord GOD (JEHOVAH the Father) hath given Me (JEHOVAH the Son) the tongue of the learned (or of the taught One), that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned." Look at chapter xlviii. 16. One who styles Himself the First and the Last, and who asserted that His hand laid the foundation of the earth, and that His right hand spanned the heavens, says: "The Lord GOD, and His Spirit, hath sent Me." Here is one person who is JEHOVAH speaking of another person who is equally JEHOVAH. This is JEHOVAH-CHRIST speaking of His Father JEHOVAH-GOD.

Come now with me to the New Testament (1 Cor. xii. 3): "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." You see this in the case of that poor, bruised, broken bone, Thomas, who doubted the appearance in resurrection-life of his blessed Lord and Master. Jesus said to him: "Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas looked up and said, "My Lord and my God." The thief on the cross, like a bone broken and bruised, cried out: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Now we come to contemplate the long deep swell of adoration and praise—

"*Who is like unto Thee?*" Listen to the glorious chorus of the bones of Christ: "For who in the heavens can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?" (Psa. lxxxix. 6). In this glorious new covenant Psalm you will see the reason why the Church of the living God, the saints of the Most High, challenge the wide universe to produce an equal to JEHOVAH-JESUS. After a description of His mercy and faithfulness, they cry out: "O LORD God of hosts!" All the hosts of heaven, all the hosts of earth, all the hosts of hell. Hosts in military array. Hosts of human beings. Hosts of beasts, birds, and crawling insects. He speaks the word, and multitudes of frogs, flies, and lice appear to torment and trouble the enemies of His people. But here we see the



hosts of His redeemed with all the hosts of circumstances and influences surrounding them, whether painful or pleasant, all working together for their good. With a feeling interest in these covenant verities, the child of God may well cry out, "Who is a strong LORD like unto Thee?" Now turn to Psa. lxxi. 19. Here the adoring members cry out to the Head: "Thy righteousness, also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things; *O God, who is like unto Thee?*" Look at any attribute of JEHOVAH, whether it be His wisdom, His power, His mercy, or His love; it matters not which, in the contemplation of each and of all, the adoring cry of the intelligent child, the living bone of the one body, is: "O LORD, who is like unto Thee?" It would be a profitable employment to search through God's blessed Word for the varied experiences of God's children when this gracious challenge arose from their adoring hearts. Hannah, when delivered from her trouble, in the contemplation of the holiness of her God, cried out: "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside Thee; neither is there any rock like our God" (1 Sam. ii. 2). Moses, with the glories of heaven in prospect, cries: "There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency in the sky. The eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before Thee; and shall say, Destroy them" (Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27).

Then when we come to contemplate Emmanuel, God with us, upon redemption ground, when we see the accomplishment of the redemption of the whole election of grace, and not one vessel of mercy lacking; when we see the communication of every spiritual blessing, and not one good thing failing; when we experience the fulfilment of covenant decrees in the communication of spiritual words, spiritual desires, and spiritual longings which He has promised to fulfil, then our adoring hearts cry out, "Who is like unto Thee?" After He has brought us to His sacred feet, and to experience sweet rest in the bosom of everlasting love; when He has sprinkled our wounded consciences with His balmy blood; when He has taken us to His loved embrace and plighted to us His covenant troth; when, after we have wandered from Him in thought, purpose, imagination, and desire, He sought us and brought us into His chamber of love, there to comfort us with the love of His heart and to delight our eyes with the beauties of His person, then we may well look up and say, "Who is like unto Thee?" We may deny Him like Peter, follow afar off, and act in accordance with the ravings of poor Peter's mind and tongue; but when He comes and says so kindly, "Lovest thou Me?" adoring humility cries out, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee. Who is like unto Thee?" Again, we are brought into spots of perplexity and anxiety, where we wish to express our wants to Him,

but we know not how. Satan taunts us with the insinuation that if we do not ask, we shall not have. But when we cannot pray as we ought, here is the marvellous mercy, He comes to the very spot of our necessity and gives us to feel the power and preciousness of those words which we have sung again and again,—

“Our righteousness—what He hath done,  
Our prayer—His prayer for us to Thee.”

As we experience the fact that He is the Intercessor for us, poor transgressors, the Advocate for us, the Father's sinful children, the Great High Priest for us, weak, unworthy worshippers, our grateful hearts bound with thankful praise, and we exclaim, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee” (Psalm lxxiii. 25). “Who is like unto Thee?” We now look at,—

III.—THE REASON FOR THIS CHALLENGE.—“Which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him.” Who are these characters? All the members of our Lord's body while in their wilderness state are spiritually poor and needy. They are poor when they cannot produce the faith demanded from them, the love which is required, the hope expected, nor the prayers sought for. We hear much of meetings for united prayer, but let me tell you that I have no faith in such meetings, for you will find nothing of the unity of the Spirit, or of the bond of peace in them. Poor and needy ones who would, but cannot, pray, find no rest there. Yet these who are bereft of their wisdom, stripped of their righteousness and shorn of their strength, find in their glorious Head, JEHOVAH-JESUS, a gracious Deliverer. How does He deliver? I will tell you how He has oftentimes delivered me. When I wanted to pray, but could not, He came in the sweet whispers of His Spirit and said to me, as He said to Peter, “I have prayed for thee” (Luke xxii. 32). When I have mourned over my unbelieving state, He has said, “I have believed for thee” (Heb. ii. 13). When I have been at my wits' end and ready to perish without hope, He came and said, I am thy hope (1 Tim. i. 1). For all my spiritual wants and necessities a copious supply is revealed in and by my living Head. That is a gracious deliverance indeed. But our text speaks of a deliverance of the poor from him that is too strong for him. Have you ever had anything to do with one stronger than yourself in spiritual matters? In deed and in truth you have. You had to do with a just and holy God revealed to you in the demands and requirements of His holy law, and He won't be put off. His demands bring to light your helplessness, His requirements prove to you your weakness. The curse of His law startles you with the unwelcome intelligence that the greater your inability, the greater your responsibility. No Arminian or free-willer can understand this. The law says, “Cursed is every

one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10); but the poor in spirit, as taught by the Holy Ghost can say, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13). The demand of the law for perfect obedience is met in the perfect obedience of Zion's Deliverer, and as this is seen, and known, and felt by the child of God, he cannot refrain from giving utterance to the exclamation, "Who is like unto Thee?"

SIN is too strong for the poor and the needy. It is personified in God's Word. "Sin hath reigned unto death" (Rom. v. 21). You who have known sin according to the painful experience portrayed in Rom. vii. 13—"Sin became exceeding sinful"—tell me, Are you a match for it? Can you put it away from you? You cannot. And you know that were it not for the power of JEHOVAH'S grace, your lives would be one continuous course of sin against Him. But the Deliverer appears. It is He who put away all your sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and now by the application of His precious atoning blood to your heart gives you to know and feel that every question of sin between you and your God is everlastingly settled. This, indeed, is a glorious deliverance, and in the enjoyment of it we can sing, "Lord, who is like unto Thee?"

SELF is too strong for the poor in spirit. Self is sure to assert itself, and who can bear up against its accursed movements? Well might the apostle cry out in the bitterness of His soul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). Who? Christ the Deliverer as He makes Himself the All in all of His poor child. THE WORLD is too strong for the poor and needy. Can you grapple with its accursed influences, its pride and rebellion against Israel's covenant God? I cannot. DEATH is too strong for me, and enters into every earthly relationship and association. It is stamped upon everything here below. But the Deliverer appears in the glorious declaration, "He hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). Look at His gracious promise to the poor! "I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues" (Hosea xiii. 14). Blessed be the name of Zion's gracious Deliverer, He has bound Himself by the most solemn engagements to deliver His people out of every temptation, trial, and tribulation, and when all the sighs and tears of the wilderness are over, they shall join in one long round of eternal praise, and the spirit of their song will be, "Lord, who is like unto Thee?"

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## COMPARISON AND CONFIRMATION.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 15TH, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“And what one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for Thy land, before Thy people, which Thou redeemedst to Thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods.

“For Thou hast confirmed to Thyself Thy people Israel to be a people unto Thee for ever : and Thou, LORD, art become their God.”—2 Samuel vii. 23, 24.

THESE are words of assurance flowing from an experimental acquaintance with JEHOVAH in His dealings with His people, and with the speaker personally. David was not one of those who are lost in a crowd, and yet he would not make an ostentatious display of himself because of the grace bestowed upon him by the anointing of God the ever-blessed Spirit. His mind was one with Paul, who, though he magnified his office, he magnified not himself because of his office. Paul had a message to deliver from the King, therefore he preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord. He had a God-given and gracious experience, yet it was not his to be incessantly harping upon that experience, for in so doing he might have distressed the spirits of many in the living family. You can see this by reading at your leisure 2 Cor. xii., where he tells us that he had more to glory in than any other mortal, but he would not only as concerned his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. David was like-minded with Paul. He delighted to exalt his Lord and Master and to worship at His footstool. It was his joy to declare what was revealed to him by God the ever-blessed Spirit, and to speak of himself as a sinner saved by grace, a pensioner upon Divine bounty, and a pre-eminent type of that great and glorious King who should reign throughout all ages over that Israel which God had distinguished as His own in a spiritual and heavenly manner.

This chapter discloses a practical and experimental view of David's experience. He had planned and purposed for God, but all his plans and purposes were overthrown. He had designed, but all his designs were thwarted. He had declared, but his declarations were proved contrary to the mind and will of God. In his plans, purposes, designs, and declarations, he fell far short of those purposes of grace which God had toward him. You see this in the circumstances narrated in this chapter. David proposed to build God a house and communicates his intention to God's prophet. Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in thine heart, for God is with thee." That same night God wrote foolishness upon the declaration of the prophet, and sent him back to David with the message, that he should not build a house for the LORD; but that the LORD would build him a house. This house of David should be spiritual, incorruptible, eternal, never to fall into decay or ruin. Can that be true? say you, in surprise. Perfectly true. But we read in Acts xv. 15, 16, that David's tabernacle did fall into ruins. James said, "Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon (that is, Simon Peter) hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." James, in speaking of ruins, refers to the earthly house of David, which was thoroughly broken down, and because of which sceptics might scoff and taunt the Israelites, saying, Where is the faithfulness of your God? Where is the performance of His promise? Now, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ we see the tabernacle of David set up. The world judges according to the flesh, literally and carnally; but those who are spiritually one with Christ judge according to the Spirit, and while they behold the ruin of all earthly things, they rejoice at the sight and possession of a spiritual house and kingdom which cannot be moved. The house of David built by God is a spiritual house, of which Paul could say, "Whose house are we" (Heb. iii. 6). When we look at any portion of the Scriptures which speaks of God's Israel, God's people, God's redeemed, God's elect, if we look at it with a carnal, fleshly, or intellectual eye, we fall far short of the glorious realities couched beneath the letter of the Word. In all these God points the eye of faith to His Church separated to Himself before time, preserved near to Himself through time in the face of all the opposition and persecution assailing it, and to be glorified with Himself when time shall be no longer.

But it is our privilege this morning to dwell upon this

precious portion, and endeavour to extract some little instruction and consolation therefrom, knowing that these are the words of the Holy Ghost flowing from the exercised heart of an eminent child of God. It leads the mind to contemplate the glories and excellencies of that kingdom which can never be moved, of that spiritual house which can never fall into ruins, of that Church which the counsels of hell can never prevail against, and of that people which can never be lost. We will notice the text in the following order :—

I.—A BLESSED COMPARISON—“And what one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel?”

II.—A GLORIOUS REDEMPTION—“Whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name.”

III.—A RIGHTEOUS VINDICATION—“And do for you great things and terrible, for Thy land, before Thy people.”

IV.—A GRACIOUS SEPARATION—“Which Thou redeemedst to Thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods.”

V.—“AN EVERLASTING CONFIRMATION—“For Thou hast confirmed to Thyself Thy people Israel to be a people unto Thee for ever : and Thou, LORD, art become their God.”

I.—A BLESSED COMPARISON—“And what one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel?” If we look at Israel after the flesh, we may well ask, What one nation so besotted, foolish, rebellious—so wandering and wavering as Israel? Look at the description given of it by the Holy Ghost in Nehemiah ix., Psalm lxxviii., and cvi. Look at Psalm lxxviii., especially; over which my soul would linger moment by moment, because there I see awful incorrigibility like my own, and the marvellous mercy and wonderful forbearance of God. That is the God I love to worship. After the declaration of mercy succeeding mercy, always accompanied with Israel's base departures from, and rebellion against, God, we come to that precious portion commencing with ver. 31 : “The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for His wondrous works.” What think ye of such a people as this? We may well say, What one nation in the earth is like Israel for sin, unbelief, and rebellion? “Therefore their days did He consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When He slew them, then they sought Him.” A strange expression, experimentally explained in the first part of Romans vii. This is God coming down by the power of His law, killing His own to all hope in themselves. “And they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless, they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not : yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He

remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." Surely after this we shall see this people established in the faith? They will surely walk in His ways and submit to His guidance! Listen! "How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy." We read of the manifestation of judgment after judgment upon their enemies, and the display of JEHOVAH'S disapprobation of His people's crooked ways, yet they are still the same, obstinate and incorrigible. Look at Psalm cvi. There you have a recital of God's mercies and Israel's miseries. "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt: they remembered not the multitude of Thy mercies, but provoked *Him* at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless, He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known." I might multiply passages to prove the utter sinfulness of God's ancient people Israel, but one more must suffice. Turn with me to Isaiah i. 4: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." No nation so favoured as Israël, and none so obstinate and perverse.

Let us now look at David's bright view of Israel as a nation loved of the Lord, upon which was conferred marvellous privileges and immunities. See how it is mentioned in Psalm xxxiii. 12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom He hath chosen for His inheritance." For the experimental possession of the privileges of this nation, the Psalmist prays: "That I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance" (Psa. cvi. 5). You see the elect, the nation, and the inheritance are the same. Now turn to Psa. cxlvii. 19, 20: "He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them." Here we have a spiritual nation and a spiritual King. A people governed, ruled, and guided by JEHOVAH'S own laws, statutes, and ordinances, spiritually communicated by His own power. What nation is this? Turn to 1 Peter ii. 9, where you will find something in perfect agreement with that which I have declared unto you: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood"—or a kingdom of priests—"an holy nation"—that is, a nation separated, distinct, selected, elected, and set apart by God Himself—"a peculiar, or purchased people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out

of darkness into His marvellous light." Time would fail me to take you through the previous portions of this epistle, descriptive of the characters of those who comprise this holy, elect nation of God. Just a hint or two. In the first verse they are addressed as "strangers scattered." And are they not so to this day? They are elect. According to what? Not according to what God saw they would be, as some who murder God's glorious truth declare. No! It is, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Not according to that Arminian gloss which I have often noticed of late—that is, our obedience because of the sanctification of the Spirit and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. It is no such thing, but the obedience as well as the blood of Jesus for them. They are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. They are heirs of an incorruptible inheritance. They are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. Sometimes they rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Sometimes they are in heaviness through manifold temptations. They rejoice in the experience of the preserving power of God, while they are in heaviness because of the trial of their faith. They see Him not with the eye of sense, yet they rejoice in the sight of Him by the eye of faith. They receive the end of their faith, which is not damnation, after the Arminian fashion, but salvation all of grace. They are born again by the Word and Spirit of God. Look at the first verse of chap. ii., and see if you have been brought this way. If you have not, I hope you will be before long. "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." We come across a tribe of cold Calvinists who will talk fluently of the doctrines of grace, but who are destitute of the grace of the doctrines as stated in this first verse. Now, say some of you, you are laying something upon our shoulders; but have you touched it with one of your fingers? My dear friends, I have touched it with my whole soul, and in the experience of that touch I have known, felt, and mourned over my weakness, infirmity, and inability. I will tell you where we are brought into the sweet apprehension of our oneness with the Spirit's teaching in this portion. It is when we are led by the Spirit to gloomy, dark Gethsemane, to the judgment hall, to the cursed cross of Calvary, and are made to feel our spiritual oneness with Him who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. But see! These persons are *coming*. It is not, they have come, nor, they shall come, but, "To whom coming." The full-blown professor—he who would have us believe that, by a stock of grace in hand, he is able to control



the world, the flesh, and the devil—will boast of his having come. But mark the language of Peter, which is that of all the subjects of this holy nation, and is in the present tense : “ *To whom coming*, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious ; ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” A little further on we read : “ Unto you therefore which believe He is precious ”—or, *an honour*—“ but unto them which be disobedient, the Stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the Head of the corner, and a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient : whereunto also they were appointed ; but ye are a holy nation.” David’s mind being led by the blessed Spirit into a spiritual view of this people, thus cries out, in wonder and admiration : “ And what one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel ? ”

God’s Israel. The Israel of God. We hear much of patriotism in the present day. Well, I should not like to feel second to any one in love to my native land. We hear much of nationalities, and in every direction we hear of men arming to the teeth in defence of their own country ; but, my dear friends, here is the question, Whence comest thou ? To what nation dost thou belong ? How many of us can look up and, by the anointing of the Holy Ghost, say : “ Our citizenship is in heaven ; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself ” (Phil. iii. 20, 21). The people of that country are loved with an everlasting love, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, provided with every mercy, comfort, and consolation needful during their journey home, and for whom “ all things ”—not some things—“ work together for good.” See ! Does famine stare the nations of the earth in the face ? Does war ravage and make desolate fair provinces ? Does pestilence produce woe and lamentation ? Here we have a people never to be hurt or destroyed by any earthly or hellish influence. Of this nation we can sing with Dr. Watts,—

“ Israel, a name divinely blest,  
May rise secure, securely rest ;  
Thy holy Guardian’s watchful eyes  
Admit no slumber nor surprise.

On thee foul spirits have no power ;  
And, in thy last departing hour,  
Angels that trace the airy road,  
Shall bear thee homeward to thy God.”

The subjects of this nation are washed from all sin in precious atoning blood. The King clothes them in durable clothing,

which waxes not old, and in which they shall appear in that glory land which He has provided for them. Blessed be His holy name, for He brings them to hunger and thirst after Him, and they shall be filled with the good things with which this nation abounds. The poor in spirit shall know that there are riches of grace and of glory in this kingdom for them. The inhabitants of this land of grace may well exclaim, with David: "And what one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel?" Though enemies abound on every hand, though dangers lurk at every step, though doubts and fears swallow up the spirits of the subjects of this nation, though the sounds of war, death, and desolation are heard on every hand, yet the glorious fact spoken by Israel's covenant God holds good: "For I will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. ii. 5). When the true Israelites arrive at that dread spot—when the spiritual training shall cease, when their school-days are for ever over, when they shall pass away from the earthly to the heavenly, to be eternally associated with Him, when their quivering spirits shall fear to tread the dark threshold which separates between this state of death and yonder state of life—then the precious promise of their God and King will be verified in their heart's experience: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isa. xliii. 2, 3).

II.—A GLORIOUS REDEMPTION—"Whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name." A redeemed people. We have this set before us in promise and in prophecy, in history and in type. We have redemption unfolded in the first fifteen chapters of Exodus. Here we see a chosen people brought into bondage. As I have often told you, the truth and spirit of the book of Genesis is election, while the book of Exodus sets forth the redemption of the people elected. God's ancient people Israel, in His never-failing providence, were taken down into Egypt. We are all acquainted with their enmity and sin against Joseph, yet an over-ruling providence was manifested through the whole transaction. Turn to Gen. xlv. 5: "Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." You sold me; but God sent me. Again: "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." Do you like that? I do. God over all things for His people. Yes, God reigns over all their infirmities, sins, and transgressions. He reigns over every sin, and over all evil committed in this wretched world, to show forth the glory of His grace in the salvation and glorification with Himself

of an eternally-loved and chosen people. You have this in the words of the text, "to redeem for a people to Himself." This is the nation before which all others sink into insignificance. Look at it as described in Psa. cxlviii. 14: "He also exalteth the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him," by sovereign decree, by eternal election, by personal redemption. In the place of their bondage they cried and sighed. Turn with me to Exodus ii. 23—25: "And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto —." Unto what? Our translators have added the word "*them*;" but He had respect unto His covenant. You see this set forth in the plea of the Psalmist in Psa. lxxiv. 20: "Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." Israel in Egypt sighed and cried for deliverance, and God having respect to His covenant came down in a succession of judgments against the Egyptians. Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the judgments of Israel's God, and that to such an extent, as to hurry him and his people on to destruction in the waters of the Red Sea. Israel was free, and on the wilderness shores of the Red Sea sang the praises of their redeeming God. See Exod. xv. 13: "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." Again, in the 16th verse: "Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased."

But all this is typical of the glorious redemption accomplished by the Surety of the covenant, by the King of this nation, who was styled in derision, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." It is blessed to notice that there was eternal truth in this derisive taunt. He was, He is, and He ever will be, "The King of the Jews." Every Jew owns and acknowledges it to be gloriously true. Every Jew? say you. I thought all the Jews looked upon our Lord Jesus Christ as an impostor. No such thing, all the Jews own and acknowledge Him to be the true Messiah—all the Jews own and acknowledge Him to be King in Zion—all the Jews own and acknowledge Him to be the King of nations and God of the whole earth. This is something more than being king over an accursed strip of ground in Asia. Let me ask you, Who are the Jews? The Holy Ghost by Paul answers the question: "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh." You must not think that all those wretched money-grubbers are Jews

in God's estimation. No such thing. "But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of man, but of God" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). Inwardly circumcised in heart, and brought into possession of the kingdom of God by the power of the Holy Ghost and the guidance of His eternal and unchanging law of love and life in Christ Jesus, elect sinners rejoice in the knowledge of their Israelitish origin and destiny. These worship and adore their glorious King who is now in the heights of glory for them. He was born King for them—He was circumcised for them—He was baptized for them—He obeyed for them—He suffered for them—He died for them—He rose again for them—He entered heaven's highest glory for them—He rules over all for them, and has given them the blessed assurance, that as He has sat down with His Father on His throne, so shall they sit with Him on His throne. These are Jews indeed, they form the nation which JEHOVAH has chosen for His own inheritance, and, blessed be His name, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. From what? Look at a few portions of God's Word which speak of His glorious work of redemption. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). The price being paid and the penalty borne, there is no more curse on new covenant ground for God's elect nation. "I will redeem them from death" (Hosea xiii. 14). On redemption ground in the land of resurrection-life there is no more death. Of these the Redeemer said, "Neither can they die any more, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 36). Never die? What! will not the time come when I shall for ever part with Grove chapel pulpit and people? Sometimes I sigh, The sooner the better. O the blessedness of having done with sin, corruption, deceit, and death! "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus ii. 14). Wondrous redemption! We confessed in our prayer this morning,

"Not on me, Lord, not on me,  
I am all iniquity."

That is the confession of every contrite spirit. The declaration of God concerning all such is, "Redeemed from all iniquity." To all the elect and redeemed nation iniquity has lost all its penal and condemning power. "He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence" (Psa. lxxii. 14). Lord, teach us more and more of Thy sweet simplicity. For the accomplishment of His redemption, the Redeemer must be brought to feel all the necessities of His redeemed. And so He was. The mighty God, the sinless Man came forth in the person of Christ and endured the whole penalty of God's outraged law. As the Surety of the covenant, He met every requirement and paid every demand by the presentation of His perfect obedience and the shedding of His most precious blood. Look at Acts xx, 28 ;

"Feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood," or, "*with the blood of His own*"—that is, with the blood of His own providing—the blood of His own everlasting covenant—"the blood of Jesus Christ His Son." Thus it is "His own blood." It is sinless, innocent, invaluable blood by which His elect are redeemed, cleansed, and sanctified before Him.

"Whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself." There is something very blessed in this declaration. It is not only freeing them from bondage, captivity, and slavery by paying a ransom price for them, but it is also taking them to Himself, for Himself, to be eternally with Himself. They are His own peculiar property—His own special treasure. He is their Keeper, Teacher and Guide. He will have them near to Himself in gracious fellowship here and in glorious unfoldings up yonder, when before their astonished gaze He reveals to them scene after scene of inexpressible glory. Notice those words, "*to make Him a name.*" No failure or flaw can be found in the redemption work of Israel's covenant God, therefore His name shall be glorious in the estimation of His redeemed. See how blessedly this is stated in Isa. lxiii. 12—14: "That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, *to make an everlasting name.* As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: so didst Thou lead Thy people, *to make Thyself a glorious name.*" Whether it be in the redemption of His people or the rest He has provided for them, the name of JEHOVAH-JESUS is exalted and very high.

III.—A RIGHTEOUS VINDICATION—"And to do for you great things and terrible, for Thy land, before Thy people." Read for yourselves that portion in Exodus iii. and xvi., and you will see God doing great things and terrible in bringing judgment after judgment upon Egypt and mercy after mercy upon Israel. Deliverance to one. Destruction to the other. And all this for His land, the land of spiritual promise and covenant favour, in which He will cause all His goodness, grace, and greatness to pass "*before His people.*" We must hasten to consider,—

IV.—A GRACIOUS SEPARATION—"Which Thou redeemedst to Thee from Egypt, from the nations, and their gods." All God's redemption acts are to set His people at a distance from Satan and his service, and to bring them into blessed association with Himself. Are we redeemed *from* Egypt? Then we are strangers *with* God in a wilderness world. Are we redeemed *out of* the earth? Then we are identified *with* Jesus in rejection. Are we redeemed *from* the power of the flesh? Then we are associated *with* the Spirit in all His gracious operations. Are we delivered *from* the authority of darkness? Then we are translated *into* the kingdom of God's dear Son. What experience have we of the redeeming love, blood, and power of Jesus?

Where are we in respect to the devil and his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and the sinful lusts of the flesh? Do we love the associations in which we formerly delighted? Has there been a redemption from these? There has in my case. I will tell you honestly before the Lord, though some precise ones say I do not act prudently in speaking of these things, sometimes I find myself like the old cavalry horse, which, when following the hounds, heard the bugle call, and started immediately with its rider to join the ranks. Though redeemed and separated by blood, I find my old inclinations and desires cropping up again and again to my sorrow and distress. It was my delight in my younger days to witness the exposition of the plays of Shakespeare by some of the masters in histrionic representation, and even now, when I see on the walls announcements of celebrated plays with noted performers, there is life in the old man, and he would be off to his old haunts and associations. He would, but cannot go. There is a separating line between myself and sin's indulgence, which is God's election. There is a mark of prohibition between me and the world's delights, which is Christ's redemption. There is an effectual separating barrier between me and the worldling's pleasures, which is the Spirit's regenerating and restoring power.

"I thirst, but not as once I did,  
The vain delights of earth to share;  
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid  
That I should seek my pleasures there."

V.—AN EVERLASTING CONFIRMATION—"For Thou hast confirmed to Thyself Thy people Israel, to be a people unto Thee for ever: and Thou, LORD, art become their God." We love a promising and a performing God. Did He predestinate a people to His eternal glory? He will prepare them for it and perfect them in it. He begets them again, brings to the birth, and blesses them with grace and glory. See! "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 30). A predestinated child shall never lack his patrimony in eternal glory, for the will and the work to effect the same is all the Lord's. Israel was a people confirmed to God by His own transactions in the counsel and covenant of old, but they must be confirmed to Him in their own heart's experience. The confirmation of the spiritual subjects of King Emmanuel in their allegiance to Him is accomplished in the school of painful but profitable experience, and shall stand for ever. We find a hint of this in Acts xiv. 22: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Does God send His testimony of love to them? He will confirm it in them by the power of

the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. i. 6). Has He taught them to wait for the revelation of His Christ in them? He will confirm them to the end, blameless in the day of Jesus Christ—that is, for ever (1 Cor. i. 8). If I am one of His pilgrim people, then tribulations and temptations, floods and flames, crosses and conflicts will work together to

“Confirm His good pleasure to bring me quite through.”

The more God in His mercy weans us by the power of His grace from this wretched, miserable world, the more we own our allegiance to Him, and our adoring hearts would cry,—

“*Let all creation join in one  
To bless the sacred name  
Of Him that sits upon the throne,  
And to adore the Lamb.*”

“This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death,” and to that eternal glory prepared by Him for His own (Psa. xlviii. 14).

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

#### H Y M N.

O ISRAEL, who is like to thee.  
A people saved, and called to be  
Peculiar to the Lord?  
Thy Shield! He guards thee from the foe;  
Thy Sword! He fights thy battles too—  
Himself thy Great Reward.

Fear not, though many should oppose,  
For God is stronger than thy foes,  
And makes thy cause His own;  
The Promised Land before thee lies—  
Go, and possess the wondrous prize,  
Reserved for thee alone.

Thy toils have almost reached a close.  
And thou art destined to repose  
Within yon glorious land;  
E'en now its rising hills are seen,  
Enriched with everlasting green,  
Where Israel soon shall stand.

In glory there the King appears;  
He wipes away His people's tears,  
And makes their sorrows cease:  
From toil and strife they there repose.  
And dwell secure from all their foes,  
In everlasting peace.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## THE COMING OF JEHOVAH-JESUS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 22ND, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.

"And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be My people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me unto thee."—Zechariah ii. 10, 11.

THE covenant kindness and care of Israel's God is the subject of this chapter. The concern He has over the objects of His love, purpose, purchase, and power, is revealed at every step. His care for them is set forth in the various metaphors abounding throughout the whole of this blessed portion of inspiration; but time would fail me to enumerate, or enter into an exposition of them. Nevertheless, I will just throw out a few hints which He may bless to some of your waiting souls. The chapter commences with the description of the prophet's seeing "a man with a measuring line in his hand," whom he asks, "Whither goest thou?" when the answer is returned, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof." In this we see JEHOVAH'S solicitude in all things connected with His Church and people. Their wants, necessities, pains, sorrows, bereavements, and disappointments all measured. This truth is revealed in Isaiah xxvii. 8: "In measure, when it shooteth forth, Thou wilt debate with it; He stayeth His rough wind in the day of His East wind." Again in Jeremiah xxx. 11: "I will correct thee in measure." This is beautifully expressed in the words of Swain:

"Our sorrows in the scale He weighs,  
And measures out our pains;  
The wildest storm His word obeys.  
His word its rage restrains."



All the blessings of the covenant, with all the mercies treasured in Christ Jesus, and all the experience of the Spirit's grace and indwelling are measured to us with infallible accuracy. Speaking of our great and glorious Head, John the Baptist says, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John iii. 34); but Paul says concerning the members of the one body, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working *in the measure of every part*, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 16). But the love of God in Christ Jesus knows no measure.

"His love no end or measure knows,  
No change can turn its course;  
Eternally the same it flows  
From one immortal source."

See! Whatever be the anxieties of our minds, the perplexities of our spirits, or the pains of our bodies, we have the assurance given in this precious mataphor, that our God measures them all out in love. He will not put upon His own more than He will give them strength to bear. He knows the length of that cankering care and of that worrying anxiety which is eating at the root of your peace this morning. He knows also the measure of sin which you must fill up to that time of love when He will appear and draw your soul into loving oneness with Himself.

Look at this glorious declaration: "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein." In this we see the abundance of ministration and provision for God's elect. "For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." Would to God we could think more of this. He Himself is the glory of His own grace, righteousness, salvation, and kingdom. "Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon." If we look upon this as a mere precept to be obeyed at will, we make a sad mistake, for there can be no true obedience to any of JEHOVAH'S gracious commands but through the performance of the same by the mighty power of God the ever-blessed Spirit. God gives not this blessed portion of His Word that we may obey it at will; but that He may bring it home to our hearts with sovereign and solemn power, and in His own good time of favour cause us to shake off our wretched Babylonish connections. Notice the next glorious declaration: "After the glory hath He sent Me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." Can you have a promise more precious than this? Yet without the the application and performance of the same by the Holy Ghost, where are you? I speak to those of you who know something of those peculiar exercises of the children of God which try them when they come across portions which appear

as so many commands only to reveal inability to obey and helplessness to comply, and seem to be placed in the Book to distract the soul. It is blessed when we are brought to experience Rom. viii. 2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." It is then we are taught the glorious truth that "God's commandings are God's enablings," and His promises will prove to be His performances in the set time to favour Zion. Look still further: "For, behold, I will shake Mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me." Who is the person here speaking? It is the LORD of hosts. What are we to understand by this? That this teaches neither Unitarianism nor Socinianism. Here one Person who is styled JEHOVAH of hosts says, JEHOVAH of hosts hath sent Me. We can only understand this in the light of that glorious truth which shines from the heart and understanding of Isaiah, as recorded in his sixth chapter. In the temple he saw the glory of Christ high and lifted up. That it was the glory of Christ we have New Testament warrant in John xii. 39—41. Isaiah says, "And one (seraphim) cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts." JEHOVAH, thrice holy. The Father holy. The Son holy. The Spirit holy. JEHOVAH the Father, JEHOVAH the Son, JEHOVAH the Holy Ghost. Yet, marvellous and mysterious truth, there are not three, but one JEHOVAH in His uncreated and undivided essence. JEHOVAH, Three in One and One in Three, is Holy. Look at the margin: "His glory is the fulness of the whole earth." God's glory is His elect scattered abroad among all nations and found by Him among all people. Israel is His glory in whom He will reveal and manifest the glory of His salvation and the glory of His grace. JEHOVAH-JESUS is the Sent of the Father to communicate the blessings of His grace to His own elect. In the declaration of such precious truths as these, we have a gracious new covenant command in the words of our text, which we will now consider in the following order:—

I.—THE REJOICING—"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion."

II.—THE REASON FOR THIS REJOICING—"For, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD."

III.—THE RESULT OF HIS COMING—"And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be My people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me unto thee."

I.—THE REJOICING—"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion." Singing songs to sad hearts is but solemn mockery. To demand a cheerful song from a captive Zionite is to add insult to injury. We find as we contemplate the various parts of God's most Holy Word by the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, that the greater portion of the time of the saint's pilgrimage is spent in

sadness, sorrow, and mourning. O, say some of you, that is not our experience. Well, what has been your experience spiritually during the past week? I do not wish to know what you have gone through in the natural course of events; but what has been your experience spiritually? Have you not lived much in entire forgetfulness of God, of His truth, of His Christ, and of His people? The very nature of your profession or occupation has filled your mind with earthly things, and a moment's reflection has caused sorrow and mourning. At times you can say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psalm lxxiii. 25); but more frequently your plaintive cry is heard, "Why hidest Thou Thy face from me?" If you have any religion whatever drawn from Himself and communicated by Himself in the very spots of necessity He has created, you know full well that mercies second-hand will not do for you. The testimony from the preacher's lips, however clear, sound, and Scriptural it may be, will come to you with chilling and freezing effect, except it be brought home with sovereign power to your heart by the Holy Ghost. If you have been favoured with a spiritual apprehension of JEHOVAH'S mind and will concerning you, I will be bound to say that in connection therewith you have experienced more of sorrow than of joy, more of darkness than of light, more of perplexity than of pleasure. We see in all this the necessity for that comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The Father is the Comforter of His sorrowing children. The Son is the Comforter of His troubled brethren. The Spirit is the Comforter of the waiting bride. But where would the comfort be if we knew nothing of mourning because of sin, our indwelling corruptions, the burden of the flesh, and Satan's temptations? There could be none whatever.

"What comfort can a Saviour bring  
To those who never felt their woe?  
A sinner is a sacred thing;  
The Holy Ghost has made him so.  
New life from Him we must receive  
Before for sin we rightly grieve."

But the precious new covenant command of our text is,

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion." What is Zion? Zion is that favoured spot upon which JEHOVAH has pitched and fixed His everlasting and unchanging affection. It is not for us to look at Zion naturally, but Zion spiritually. Over Zion upon earth, the cold crescent at this moment waves, and the standard of the infidel is unfurled. Satan, with his superstitions, idolatries, and delusions, reigns on every hand. It is our blessed privilege to stand with Paul upon new covenant ground and associate with those who are Jews indeed and in truth. Look at Heb. xii. 22—24: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly

and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." This is Zion, the perfection of beauty, where God reveals Himself. It is the Church of the living God. It is where the spirits of just men appear in perfection, even the perfection of their great and glorious Head. There are those who look upon Zion and Israel as apart altogether from the Church of God. Such are perfectly welcome to their crude and carnal views; but I know of no Zion or Israel apart from the Church, the people, the elect, the redeemed of JEHOVAH. All who are identified with the Mediator of the covenant on Mount Zion stand on new covenant ground, having departed from the dark shades of Sinai, where nothing is heard but wrath and condemnation. On Zion blessings abound to the elect and redeemed of God through their great and glorious King, a precious Christ. In the revelation of Christ to the soul God's covenant command goes forth with power, and the daughter of Zion cannot but sing and rejoice.

But why this singing and rejoicing? It is because God has graciously communicated the fact that He has measured out everything for me. When such a glorious fact is revealed to my heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, I must rejoice. Satan may bring in dread array all the sins of my past life, he may taunt me with my inability, and the accursed indifference which oftentimes seizes me; but when my Saviour and Deliverer is revealed to the eyes of my spiritual understanding, I can do nothing but rejoice before Him. At such seasons as these I can glorify God in the fire and in the flood, and in the vale of humiliation when I am blessed with the sweet assurance that my God has designed and measured all for me and none against me. If God in covenant, God in His determination, and God in His dealings be for us, who can be against us? In the revelation of this glorious fact I hear the covenant command of my God, and my heart rejoices before Him. Look still further. He makes Himself known to me as my Shelter and Defence: He says, "I will be a wall of fire round about her." God my salvation is God my security. He has made Himself, in His attributes and promises, so many walls and bulwarks round about His people, over which neither sin, nor Satan, nor hell, nor death, nor curse, nor condemnation can ever pass. When I am brought to the knowledge of the blessed fact, that within those sacred bounds of His own appointing and fixing I stand in undisturbed security with Him, free from every sin with which Satan would accuse me, free from every condemnation with which he would scare me, free from every accusation with which he would terrify me, how can I refrain from giving thanks to the Father who has made me meet to be a partaker

of the inheritance of the saints in light? What light is that? "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee" (Isa. lx. 1). Not future; but present. See 2 Cor. iv. 6: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined *into*?" No! "Hath shined *in* our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Blessed with a glorious defence around us, and with His glorious light within us, we must rejoice.

But look still further. We have not only the security, but the sympathy of JEHOVAH-JESUS. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." Here human sensitiveness is brought forth to illustrate the jealous care with which God watches over His own in every persecution or tribulation they endure. Turn to 2 Thess. i. 6: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you: and to you who are troubled rest with us." You may depend upon it, if we were kept in remembrance of the sympathy and succour flowing from the compassionate heart of Jesus, we should not manifest the impatience and irritability we are conscious of sometimes. O what a kind, gracious, and loving God we have! He has reserved to Himself the gracious right of bearing all our cares, concerns, and anxieties. Lord! come with Thine own sweet power and say unto my soul, "Cast all thy care upon Me, for I care for thee." In dwelling upon this rejoicing, I should like you to notice that precious covenant command in Zeph. iii. 14, in which there has been a sweetness and blessedness to my soul for many long years: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments." Can you do anything else but rejoice when the Lord makes known to you the blessed fact that He has taken away your judgment? All the curse and condemnation due to us carried into the land of never-ending forgetfulness, thrown into the sea of eternal oblivion, cast behind God's back by the sufferings and death of the Surety of the covenant, who endured all the judgment, condemnation, curse and wrath due to His people. In the communication of this glorious fact, can you do aught else but rejoice? Yes,

"Dissolved by *such* goodness I fall to the ground,  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

Why, my friend, there is rejoicing in thy very tears. See! "He hath cast out thine enemy." O, cries some sorrowing soul, "I wish He had." But, has He not cast out thine enemy? While Satan was within and held undisputed and undisturbed possession of thy soul, he was at peace with you, and you were at peace with him. You were on good terms with him and he with you. There was no trouble, no anxiety, no distress of

soul in regard to spiritual and eternal realities until a greater than he, even our most glorious Christ, came and drove him out of the spot he had so long usurped. Until the set time of favour, he reigns and rules in the hearts, understandings, affections, and wills of elect and redeemed sinners; but when Christ comes by the power of the Holy Ghost, casts out the usurper and takes his place, he can never enter there again. Some of you may object, saying, "I feel him in me daily." You fancy you do, but let me assure you it is not so. If Christ is in you, Satan will not let you alone. You will feel his accursed injections, his hellish insinuations, his fierce temptations working upon your fleshly and carnal nature; but the idea of Satan being in a regenerated child of God is contrary to the mind and will of JEHOVAH the Father, to the redeeming work of JEHOVAH the Son, and to the grace and indwelling of JEHOVAH the Spirit. He can never take possession again; but, as assuredly as he is dethroned and cast out, and the Christ of God, whose sweet company is the only source of true delight to you, is set up in your affections, Satan will harass you with hurling many a fiery dart at you, distress you with many an accusation, and worry you with many a fit of unbelief and rebellion. But when the precious communication is made to your exercised spirit, that there is no condemnation to you, and that your enemy, God's enemy, Christ's enemy, is cast out, you cannot but rejoice. "The King of Israel, even the LORD is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more." No more? That is like the old fellow who thanked God for the end of the week, saying, "The troubles, trials, and temptations will never be encountered again, the evil of them I shall see no more for ever." That is covenant communication and covenant rejoicing.

" Rejoice, ye saints, in every state,  
Divine decrees remain unmoved;  
No turns of Providence abate  
God's care for those He once has loved."

We now come to notice—

II.—THE REASON FOR THIS REJOICING—"For, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD." The coming of the Bridegroom to the bride is the joy and rejoicing of her heart. We will notice a few instances of JEHOVAH'S coming to His people during the Old Testament dispensation. We love a *coming* God, but we do not like a *going* God. We love the revelation of God to us and in us. His nature is to come to us. Our nature is to go from Him. Mark you, I am not now speaking of the Divine nature manifest in regeneration, but of our nature derived from Adam the first. According to that nature, we shall get as far away as we possibly can from God. In connection with this subject I have seen and enjoyed more spiritual profit, blessedness, and comfort from the third

chapter of Genesis than ever I have heard from the pulpit, or seen from the press. The glory of God's Gospel is set before us in that chapter. It is invariably quoted to prove the fall of man, the utter degeneracy of human nature, the complete ruin entailed by Adam upon his posterity, and the reign of death and destruction upon the earth. But upon new covenant ground, with God's light thrown upon it, I see something higher and more glorious than all this. I do see Adam and Eve plunged in the depths of the fall; but I see also a covenant God coming! coming! coming! Seeking! seeking! seeking! Saving! saving! saving! The guilty pair heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the cool of the day, and hid themselves behind the trees of the garden. The Voice of JEHOVAH found them in their hiding place, and drew from Adam the confession of his sin, and guilt, and shame. He then proclaimed salvation full and free through the bruising of the heel of the seed of the woman, and the utter destruction of Satan's powerful designs against His Church and people. Then we come to that glorious last verse, "So He drove out the man." Drove him out of his earthly Eden to find in Him a heavenly home. This is true in the experience of every elect vessel of mercy in every spot where he would feather his nest, make earth delightful, or seek the comforts of home at the expense of God's glory. He drives out elect men only to bring them into the land of spiritual promise, there to reveal to them the love of his heart, the riches of His grace, and the blessings of His everlasting covenant.

"*Lo, I come!*" is the cry of the Surety of the new covenant, the Person who speaks in our text. Look at Him in His coming to Abram, as recorded in Gen. xv. 1. "After these things." After the din of war and the clash of arms. "After these things the Word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward." This is none other than the Covenanting Word (Hag. ii. 5); the Word of the LORD by whom the heavens were made (Psa. xxxiii. 6); the communicating Word to all the election of grace. He came to counsel and comfort Abram in a time of spiritual darkness and necessity. You see Him again coming and communing with Abraham in Gen. xviii.; but in the last verse we are told, "the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham; and Abraham returned unto his place," which was one of bitterness, dreariness, and discontent.

"*Lo, I come!*" This was fact when Israel was in affliction, bondage, and oppression in Egypt. He heard their cry, communicated His mind to Moses in Horeb. He then visited His oppressed people and made Himself known to them in His judgments upon their oppressors. He redeemed them by a mighty hand, guided them through their wilderness wanderings,

in the midst of which He gave to Moses a design for the tabernacle in which He would reveal Himself to Israel, His covenant people, in the shekinah above the mercy-seat. To Moses He said, "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel" (Exod. xxv. 22). In every part and particular of the tabernacle, it matters not how minute or insignificant it may appear, we have a lively type of the sacred and sinless humanity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. See how He is revealed in John i. 14: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," or, as it may be legitimately rendered, "*tabernacled among us.*" This was the tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. The tabernacle in the wilderness was typical of the pre-ordained One who should come, typical of that great and glorious JEHOVAH-JESUS whose goings forth from the days of eternity have been for the glory of His Father and for the eternal salvation of His people. That He should come we have the testimony of Jacob in Gen. xlix. 10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." This is Zion's Peacemaker, the Prince of peace and unto Him shall the gathering of the elect tribes of Israel be.

Turn with me to Psalm xl. 6, 7. Here we have the Lord Jesus Christ speaking: "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire: Mine ears hast Thou opened." This has reference, no doubt, to Exod. xxi. 6, where the faithful servant is represented as having his ear bored to the door post, thus signifying that he would serve his master for ever and would not go out free. "Burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me." Now turn to Heb. x. 5—10: "Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all.*" ONCE, never to be repeated. ONCE, and for ever. Our text this morning is a glorious prophecy of the coming in the flesh of our blessed Lord and Saviour. It is a wondrous prophecy of His mysterious incarnation. The necessity for this marvellous act of condescension on the part of JEHOVAH the eternal Word is seen in the demand



of God's righteous law for perfect obedience thereto, and in the event of failure for perfect satisfaction. These demands bring to light the inability of the sinner to obey, and his unwillingness to suffer, which could only be in the pains of hell for ever. From the bosom of the Father the God-Man came, according to the promise, "Lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee." Who can sound forth the love of JEHOVAH-JESUS in taking upon Himself to deliver elect man and not abhorring the virgin's womb? As Man He suffered. As God He satisfied. As the God-Man Mediator of His Church and people, He obeyed God's law perfectly, and satisfied its claims supremely. As bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, during a life of suffering here upon earth, He learned how to sympathise truly with His tried and tempted brethren, and how to come with His succour to the very spots of necessity appointed for them in their Father's will. Again and again He comes just where His people are in the experience of the weight of their sins, the burden of their anxieties, the crushing nature of their cares, and the overwhelming power of Satan's temptations. It matters not what their circumstances and sorrows may be, in the time appointed of the Father, the faithful Servant of the covenant is nigh at hand to bless with His salvation, sympathy, and succour. In the days of His flesh He was ready to cast out a legion of devils from one, the very perfection of devilry from another, as in the case of Mary Magdalene, or a raving and tearing devil from a child of whom it is said, "And as he was yet a coming the devil threw him down, and tare him" (Luke ix. 42). You all know that beautiful incident in the parable of the Good Samaritan, when religion and education could do nothing for the poor wretch who lay stripped, wounded, and half dead, the "Samaritan as he journeyed, *came where he was*: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, *and went to him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke x. 33, 34). Blessed be the name of our JEHOVAH-JESUS! Of Him we can sing with rejoicing spirits,

"In every pang that rends the heart,  
The Man of sorrows bears a part;  
He sympathises with the grief,  
AND BRINGS THE SUFFERING SAINT RELIEF."

This is not all. His promise was that He would not only come to His people in the days of His flesh, but, "I will dwell in the midst of thee." These are cheering and encouraging words to Zion that dwells with the daughter of Babylon, to Zion in captivity, to Zion crushed under the galling yoke of the oppressor, to Zion mourning over her weakness and unworthiness. Zion, whom no man seeketh after, is here blessed, with the promise of her seeking God. Of Him it is said, "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her,

yea, the set time is come" (Psa. cii. 13). Of her He could say, by the pen of His servant David, "For the LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Psa. cxxxii. 13, 14). It is a glorious privilege when we are taken, amid all our cares and anxieties, to rest our weary heads in the bosom of everlasting love. Our rest is sweet and precious in the person of a covenant God in Christ. But what must the rest of JEHOVAH be? See! "His rest shall be glorious" (Isa. xi. 10). Where is the rest of a covenant God in Christ? It is the heaving bosom, the anxious spirit, the broken heart of an elect vessel of mercy. Think of that! The great JEHOVAH dwelling with and in elect and redeemed sinners. "For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Cor. vi. 16).

Turn now with me to that wonderful declaration in Isa. xlviii. 16: "Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I; and now the Lord GOD, and His Spirit hath sent Me." The correct rendering of this is, "*And now the Lord GOD hath sent Me and His Spirit.*" JEHOVAH-JESUS was sent by the Father to accomplish the salvation of Zion. He came, and returned to render a faithful account of His service. JEHOVAH THE SPIRIT was sent to testify of the Father's Christ and to reveal Him in the experiences of His suffering brethren, bringing them into blessed association with the Man of sorrows, to feel their helplessness and nothingness, and to find in Him all the treasures of covenant grace and mercy as their refreshment in time and their rejoicing throughout eternity. Let us now briefly notice,—

III.—THE RESULT OF HIS COMING—"And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be My people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me unto thee." This was fulfilled in part on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts ii. 5—11. Out of every nation under heaven elect ones were gathered by the power of the Holy Ghost to the person of Jesus, God-Man, Sovereign Ruler over all. From this time, until time shall be no longer, the promise of Christ shall be fulfilled in every spot of the habitable parts of God's earth, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). Not only to Zion collectively, but to Zion individually. Its truth shall be verified in the assembly of the saints in the congregation of the faithful as they listen to the declarations of God's sent servant, and as they hang upon the lips of God's faithful ministers for personal instruction and edification that there may be the individual realisation of that truth, "Christ in you the Hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). If He

dwells in our hearts by faith, it will be our blessed privilege to join in the song of the redeemed,—

“THOU ART WORTHY TO TAKE THE BOOK, AND TO OPEN THE SEALS THEREOF: FOR THOU WAST SLAIN, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD, OUT OF EVERY KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE, AND NATION; AND HAST MADE US UNTO OUR GOD KINGS AND PRIESTS: AND WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH” (Rev. v. 9, 10).

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

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#### H Y M N.

IN songs of sublime adoration and praise,  
Ye pilgrims, for Sion who press,  
Break forth, and extol the great Ancient of days,  
His rich and distinguishing grace.

His love, from eternity, fixed upon you,  
Broke forth and discovered its flame,  
When each with the cords of His kindness He drew,  
And brought you to love His great Name.

Oh ! had He not pitied the state you were in,  
Your bosoms His love had ne'er felt ;  
You all would have lived, would have died too, in sin,  
And sunk with the load of your guilt.

What was there in you that could merit esteem ?  
Or give the Creator delight ?  
’Twas “ Even so, Father ! ” you ever must sing,  
“ Because it seemed good in Thy sight.”

’Twas all of Thy grace we were brought to obey !  
While others were suffered to go  
The road which by nature we chose as our way,  
Which leads to the regions of woe.

Then give all the glory to His holy name,  
To Him all the glory belongs ;  
Be yours the high joy still to sound forth His fame,  
And crown Him in each of your songs.—KEITH.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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“THE LORD BLESS THEE.”

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 29TH, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“The LORD bless thee, and keep thee :

“The LORD make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee.

“The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”—Num.  
vi. 24—26.

IN the portion I have read as my text, JEHOVAH reveals His covenant relationship to His people Israel as a God opening His hand to satisfy the wants of all things living in His kingdom, and to fill with plenteousness those hungering souls who are brought to hang upon His bounty, and to depend solely upon His distribution of the provisions of His grace.

Several times it has been my lot to set before you the peculiar characteristic of each division of the Pentateuch or five books of Moses, which really means, one book in five. GENESIS reveals God electing and separating to Himself a people whom He would redeem to Himself, keep by His power, and preserve amid all the dangers and distresses of their wilderness wanderings. A chosen people to be near to Him, according to that precious declaration in Psalm cxlviii. 14: “He also exalteth the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, *a people near unto him.*” This people, in His own good providence, and by the guidance of His Spirit, to be brought into close association, communion, and fellowship with Him.

EXODUS reveals God redeeming His elect people. A people elected must be a people redeemed. Election is the certain forerunner of redemption. In this book we see Israel redeemed by the mighty hand and outstretched arm of JEHOVAH. Redeemed wholly in and by Himself. But these redeemed ones must be brought to bow in profound reverence

and worship before Him. The means for bringing this about are all in His own hands, to be wrought according to His own pattern, plan, and purpose. Toward the close of Exodus you will see repeated again and again, "As the LORD commanded Moses," and, "Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he." The tabernacle was raised in which the glory of JEHOVAH was revealed, His blessings pronounced, and His mercies dispensed to Israel through their representative, the great high priest.

LEVITICUS reveals an elect and redeemed people worshipping, a people entering into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Worship and service is here set forth on the ground of accomplished redemption. As we contemplate the rich and sovereign grace of God as revealed in the tabernacle service, and in the various offerings presented to us at the commencement of this book, we cannot but admire the combination of wisdom and love in the way He has made for the introduction of His people into His presence and for the enjoyment of Himself. I wish you to notice the order of the offerings as they are revealed in the opening chapters. God begins with the burnt offering. We would begin with the trespass offering. Every sinner who is awakened to a sense of His sinnership tries to settle matters with his trespasses and sins. He would deal with the fruit of the tree and not with the root. Sin in the act thereof, and not sin in the flesh. Vain man would begin with himself and not with God, with the creature and not with the Creator. But it has pleased God in the opening up of the riches of His grace to show unto us how He can meet poor, wretched, hell-deserving sinners whom He loves, on ground Divinely appointed and prepared. In the burnt offering we see a whole Christ presented to the Father. No dividing of the parts here. No breast and shoulder for the priests, but a whole Christ for the Father's heart. All that Christ is, was, or shall be, in the estimation of the Father, is there presented to Him. In the second chapter we have the meat offering, in which God begins with details as to the wants and necessities of His people. In the fine flour mingled with oil we have the sinless person, character, and obedience of Jesus for His people. Yes, here we have a beautiful type of the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, produced by the miraculous operation of God the ever-blessed Spirit in the womb of the virgin. In the order of time He was set apart by the Holy Anointing Oil being poured upon Him, as we see in the account of His baptism at the Jordan. In all this we see spotless righteousness provided for all those who have access to the Father through the Surety of the everlasting covenant. The fourth chapter reveals the peace offering. "Peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. v. 1). The fourth chapter describes the sin offering. In this we see

all questions of sin disposed of between a worshipping people and their God. The fifth chapter gives an account of the trespass offering, in which the eye of faith beholds every transgression, sin, and iniquity, met and answered by the one offering, sacrifice, and oblation of our great and glorious Lord. We then come to the law of the peace offering (chap. vii. 28—34), in which we see true worshippers enjoying "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." They feed upon the breast which sets forth the everlasting love and unchanging affection of JEHOVAH to His people. They also feed upon the shoulder, which signifies His irresistible power. In the spiritual understanding of this the true spiritual worshippers of JEHOVAH can sing,—

"This God is the God we adore,  
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;  
His love is as great as His power,  
And neither knows measure nor end."

NUMBERS reveals an elect, redeemed, and worshipping people, warring and wandering. And here we see how well adapted are all the revelations of the God of all grace to the peculiar circumstances, temptations, and trials through which His children must pass in the wilderness. Commands, injunctions, and instructions abound in Exodus and Leviticus, but the moment the children of Israel are called to march and to conflict at God's command, Aaron and his sons (lively types of our Lord Jesus Christ) appear pronouncing the blessing of Israel's Three-One God. Blessings must abound wherever the great King-Priest appears for His people, according to that precious verse by Dr. Watts,—

"Blessings abound where'er He reigns,  
The prisoner leaps to loose his chains,  
The weary find eternal rest,  
And all the sons of want are blest."

In Numbers we see a people marching according to covenant command, Divine arrangement and guidance. Aaron appears in his priestly dress at the head of all Israel, and declares the mind, will, purpose, and good pleasure of JEHOVAH concerning those whom He had signalized as His own peculiar property, separated from all the nations of the earth, and blessed them with the power and preciousness of His presence in their midst.

At every step we see Aaron in his priestly character, a type of our Great High Priest. He treads the hallowed precincts of the tabernacle on the ground of accomplished and accepted atonement. Within the veil he appears with the blood of bulls and of calves, sprinkling the same upon and before the mercy-seat. Upon the mercy-seat to show that all God's requirements were met and answered, and before the same to show that by blood-shedding there was Divinely appointed and prepared

ground upon which elect, redeemed, and regenerate sinners can meet with a just and holy God with the sweet experience of His peace which passeth all understanding, and which keeps or garrisons the heart and mind in the knowledge and love of Him. In this sixth chapter of Numbers Aaron appears as the representative of a separated people. Nazarites, indeed, in fellowship with their God, Guardian, and Guide. As God's representative to them, as the pronouncer of JEHOVAH'S blessings, as the communicator of His gracious mind and will, love, and affections, he turns and blesses the children of Israel, saying, "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

It is our blessed privilege this morning to consider the first of this string of new covenant blessings, and in doing so we will notice God's precision and decision in all matters pertaining to the revelation of Himself to His people. Look at the 22nd and 23rd verses: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel." Here you see how particular God is in the injunctions He lays upon His people. "*On this wise*;" not according to any decree, determination, or decision of the elders or leaders of the people, but according to God's rule, God's Word, and God's Spirit, the children shall be taught and blessed. To a people loved with an everlasting love, chosen of God and to God, redeemed by precious blood, and accepted in the Beloved, there can no curse be found. Satan may curse, the world may curse, Rome may curse, and hypocrites may curse, but all their curses combined affect not the Israel of God. That is gloriously true which, through the sovereign power of God the Holy Ghost, fell from the lips of Balaam the false prophet, and was wrung from the disappointed spirit of Balak. See Num. xxiii. 11, 20—23: "And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether." But listen to the glorious declaration of Balaam: "Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" Mark you, it is not, What hath Israel wrought? but, "What hath God wrought?" It is our blessed privilege to worship that same promising and performing God within these walls, and that according to Divinely-appointed order. Order? Yes, even that which He maintains by the power of the Holy Ghost in the experience of our hearts.

By the revelation of the demands of His righteous law, He brings His people to a feeling conviction of their inability, helplessness, and impotency, which shuts them out from all hope of ever performing anything whereby they shall obtain His favour or approving smile. But, being shut out from every fleshly hope, they are *shut up* to the one glorious Hope, even the revelation of a precious Christ performing all things necessary for their acceptance with God, their safe conduct to glory, and their enjoyment of His presence and company throughout a never-ending eternity. This is in accordance with the various declarations of God's mind and the experiences of His children recorded in His blessed Book. See! "*He performeth the thing that is appointed for me*" (Job xxiii. 14). "*I will cry unto God most High; unto God that performeth all things for me*" (Psa. lvii. 2). "*LORD, Thou hast wrought all our works in us*" (Isa. xxvi. 12). "*It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*" (Phil. ii. 13). For my standing before my God I am dependent wholly upon the doing and dying of Jesus. For the enjoyment of my standing before God I am dependent wholly upon the doing and witnessing of the Holy Ghost in me. It is a blessed privilege to know that I have God the Father *for me* in His sovereign decree of election, God the Son *with me* in His glorious doings in redemption, and God the Holy Ghost *in me*, communicating, communing, counselling, and comforting. Through the rich and magnanimous grace of Israel's Three-One JEHOVAH, I am privileged to walk with Him and associate with His people in time, and I am encouraged with the good hope that I shall enjoy Him through a blessed and blissful eternity.

Well, in Jesus we behold the great and glorious Antitype of Aaron pronouncing the blessing of Israel's God upon all God's Israel. He is the Communicator of our minds to the Father, and of the Father's mind to us.

"Jesus, we bless Thy Father's name;  
Thy God and ours are both the same;  
What heavenly blessings from His throne  
Flow down to sinners through His Son."

As Jesus stands in the presence of the Father for us, so we stand in Him. He is blessed with every blessing; but it is all for His people. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). In the threefold benediction I have read as my text we find the name JEHOVAH thrice:

JEHOVAH bless thee and keep thee.

JEHOVAH shine upon thee and enrich thee.

JEHOVAH smile upon thee and ease thee.

The threefold revelation of the name JEHOVAH shrouds the whole of this precious portion in mystery in the mind of a natural Jew, and cause him to be hidden in the land of far distances; while to the mind of a spiritual Jew, he who is one



inwardly, JEHOVAH is revealed ready to save and nigh at hand to bless. By comparing this benediction of the Old Testament with that of the New, we see at once the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. In it is revealed the threefold cord of covenant love which sin, death, hell, nor all combined, can ever break or destroy. See!

JEHOVAH the Father electing a people by His grace.

JEHOVAH the Son redeeming a people by His blood.

JEHOVAH the Spirit quickening a people by His power.

Blessed people!

Provided for by JEHOVAH the Father.

Preserved by JEHOVAH the Son.

Prepared by JEHOVAH the Spirit.

A people reserved, redeemed, and regenerated by JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—Israel's Triune God. This is Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity. There are many who believe in a Trinity in Unity, but there are precious few who see a Unity in Trinity. They cannot see or apprehend the undivided harmony of the glorious Three-in-One. Does the Father elect a people to Himself? The Son redeems them and no other. The Spirit confines Himself in His gracious operations to the elect and redeemed.

"Eternal, free, electing grace  
Redemption's bound'ry sets;  
And those whom Jesus died to save  
The Spirit ne'er forgets."

The harmony of the Divine Three is clearly stated in one of the creeds of the established religion of this country. I am not going to be an advocate for any human compilation or creed this morning, for the only creed worth having is that written in the heart by the grace and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Yet a form of sound words is not to be despised in this truth-despising day. As we contemplate the Divine Three-in-One, we acknowledge JEHOVAH the Father, JEHOVAH the Son, and JEHOVAH the Holy Ghost, and yet we know not three JEHOVAHS, but one JEHOVAH. What is the mind of the Father, such is the mind of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. What is the determination of the Father is the desire of the Son and the doing of the blessed Spirit. Eternally-loved sinners are selected by the Father, saved by the Son, and established by the Holy Ghost. What is the will of the Father is the will of the Son and the will of the Spirit. Is it the Father's will to communicate His love to poor vile sinners? The Son and the Spirit are ready to do His bidding. See Isa. xlviii. 16: "And now the Lord GOD hath sent Me and His Spirit." JEHOVAH the Son speaks in this portion as the Sent One to accomplish the work of His people's salvation, and of the Spirit

as the Sent One to reveal His salvation in the heart of every one interested therein. Who are they?

Israel. A separated people. A people brought by Divine grace and power to dwell alone. Not only distinct from every other people, but each individual to experience his separation from all to God. This is not very comfortable for poor human nature; but, depend upon it, there is more couching beneath that word "*alone*" than we oftentimes imagine. Turn to Gen. xxxii. 24: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day." Jacob left to feel his loneliness and utter dependence upon his Saviour-God. While in this state of loneliness, His God appears to reveal to him the riches of His grace and the glories of His kingdom. Notice the importunity of Jacob: "And he said, I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me. And He said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked Him and said, Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name. And He said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name? *And He blessed him there.*" Oh, what a precious blessing! From loneliness and banishment to be a prince with God. All true Israelites, as princes in union with the Lord Jesus Christ and enjoying the sweet anointings of the Holy Ghost, can sing: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. i. 5, 6). God's Israel appears before Him as a kingdom of princes and priests. Here are worshippers with Him in His temple. Princes with Him on His throne. In the set time of favour, the covenant Angel, the great King-Priest, appears to every one of them on the ground of the Father's election, His own accomplished redemption, and says: "*The LORD bless thee.*"

Mark you! The preacher may reach the ear, but it is not at all times he can do that. The mind is pre-occupied with the perplexities of providence, while the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil harass the soul and absorb the whole attention. I speak feelingly and experimentally, therefore I know it is an utter impossibility for the preacher to reach the ear or engage the attention of one whom God has left to himself; and still more do I feel the impossibility of any mortal reaching the understanding and the heart. In the knowledge of this, we may well join with the hymn writer—

"We have listen'd to the preacher,  
Truth by him has now been shown;  
But we want a greater Leader,  
From the everlasting throne.  
Application  
Is the work of God alone."

JEHOVAH can and will reach the heart of His own Israel with His covenant blessing. He dwells in their midst collectively. He rests in the heart individually. He takes His pilgrim disciples into a desert place privately, and communicates to them the secrets of His bosom and the love of His heart. We sang this morning,—

“Oh, this is rest, Lord Jesus,  
Alone with Thee to be;  
The desert is a garden  
With Thy blest company.  
With crowds I might forget, Lord,  
That I am all Thine own;  
I bless Thee for the desert,  
With Thee, my Lord, alone.”

In the proclamation and communication of this blessing of the covenant Three-in-One, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, there is a spirit of intense individuality. Our God will deal personally with each of us. His blessing runs thus, “The LORD bless thee.” Don’t you see this in the case of poor doubting Thomas? Jesus brought the poor doubter face to face with Him, and drew from his loving and adoring heart the cry of humble assurance, “My Lord and my God.” “Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John xx. 28, 29). From a blessed and a blessing Jesus no curse can proceed, no, not even to unbelieving disciples. Through His most precious blood and perfect righteousness the curse is for ever removed from new covenant ground. By Him the curse and condemnation of the law has been everlastingly swept away. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. viii. 1). How many of us can honestly and spiritually claim this blessing of the new covenant as revealed in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ?

“The LORD bless thee.” If He does, the blessings will not come single-handed. Here the mind runs instinctively to that blessed family epistle. See Eph. i. 3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Here we see a people blessed in Christ in the heavenlies, and their blessedness not affected by the earthlies for a single moment. Here we may inquire, Upon what ground is this people blessed? The Holy Ghost by Paul answers, “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.” God’s blessing is according to His love for, and election of, His people. Not even according to His knowledge of their necessity, nor according to His foreview of their faith, repentance, love, or good works. Oh, no; but wholly on the ground of what He is to them in His sovereign, unconditional, and eternal election of them in the Son of His love. How is this blessed choice known by us? Moses answers, “Is it not in that Thou goest with us?

so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are on the face of the earth" (Exod. xxxiii. 16). This is, not a God afar off, but a God nigh at hand. He is not a God commanding, but a God communicating. He is for us, with us, and in us. Thus blessed with the God of the covenant, and the provisions of the covenant to comfort, cheer, and defend us all through our wilderness sojournings, we rejoice in hope of that eternal glory which Christ is made to us and in us through His matchless righteousness, sin-atonement, death, glorious resurrection and all-prevalent intercession. The first chapter of Ephesians reveals the blessings of the great Three-in-One. The first part contains the blessings designed by the Father for His children. As the Father He blesses them. As the Elector He chooses them. As the Designer He predestinates them. As the Adopter He brings them into His family. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." Not left to our own wills and ways; but "to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Predestination is the Father's act before time; adoption is His act in time. He takes His children from among those of the devil, and brings them feelingly and experimentally to know their standing in His family. He blesses them with grace and acceptance in the Beloved. Here the beloved Saviour, Prophet, Priest, and King appears and blesses His people, even us, with redemption through His blood. As the redeemed of God, we long for a sense of His forgiving love. The first cry of an awakened sinner is for forgiveness. Oh, how blessedly God's way of forgiving His people is revealed in the Scriptures of truth! He forgives freely! He forgives fully! He forgives frankly! "When they had nothing to pay, He frankly forgave them both" (Luke vii. 42). No goodness! No hope! No faith! No repentance! The forgiveness of sins is free according to the riches of His grace. He forgives fully. Sins past, sins present, sins to come, sins original, sins actual, sins of the body, sins of the mind, sins public, sins private, sins against His wonderful working providence, sins against His rich and sovereign grace; yet all for ever put away by the one sacrifice of Jesus and the knowledge of forgiveness secured through His unceasing intercession. He forgives frankly! What is meant by that? At once, with no hesitation on His part. He forgives for nothing. Just when He will. Yes, for nothing! Not a ray of hope will He accept as payment. Not a particle of faith as payment. Not a spark of love as payment. No repentance as payment. He will not descend to barter His blessing of forgiveness. See!

"Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to THYSELF I cling"—

I like "Thyself" better than "Thy cross"—

"Naked, come to Thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;

Foul, I to the Fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

Oh, what a precious blessing! Free, full, and frank forgiveness. I have nothing to pay and yet He forgives me all. Look at that glorious declaration in Psalm xxv. 11, breathed in the Psalmist's desires: "For Thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great." There is no holding back, hiding, or extenuation, no attempt to make the best of his case, but a clear, frank confession of iniquity in all its extent and enormity: "Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." This is the great King-Priest's delight as He appears before the spiritual gaze of His worshipping people. He pronounces pardon full and free through His own most precious wounds and blood. But pardon will never fully satisfy a living soul. What more can he want? Well, I do not want to stand before my God throughout a long eternity as a pardoned culprit or a forgiven criminal. I long to stand before Him holy and without blame, as though I had never sinned. I desire to enjoy unceasingly the sentence of justification from all law claims, clearance from all Satan's accusations, freedom from all transgression, sin, and iniquity, and a standing in blessed oneness with the Son of His love, spotless, holy, righteous, and perfect as He is perfect, "accepted in the Beloved." I am satisfied with nothing short of that precious testimony by John: "Herein is love made perfect." This is the love of a covenant God to us and in us. "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment"—that is, in the day when the world, Satan, and conscience judges. "Because as He is, so are we in this world." How is He? Not as He was in the judgment hall of Pilate and before the high priest arraigned as a culprit, or before the bar of infinite justice as a curse for His people. Many have found fault with Martin Luther for a saying of his something to this effect—that *Jesus Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived*—that is, by imputation. I do not find fault with it, and I will tell you why I do not. Because the Lord has graciously led me farther than that saying can take me. Turn to 2 Cor. v. 21: "For He (the Father) hath made Him sin for us." He did not make Him commit sin; but He constituted, accounted, and dealt with Him as such. The whole mass of sin which His people was, and all the sin they have committed, or shall commit from Adam's day to the end of time, was laid upon Him. All that met upon Him. He was answerable for it all. God dealt with Him as if He were the whole of it. As SIN He met the dark cloud of judgment, the fiery indignation which devours all adversaries, but could not devour Him. He met and endured the hell of suffering which we so richly deserved. He was made SIN for us, not a sin offering, that we might be made, not merely righteous, but "the righteousness of God in Him." See! He took our sin and gave us His right-

eousness. He took our place, ay, and more, for He took us into unceasing union with Himself. From Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross He was perfectly identified with His people and they with Him. Every phase and feature of His obedience was rendered by them in Him. He suffered, the law received its just demands from them in Him. He satisfied God's justice, holiness, and truth, in which they are eternally interested. Of the Father's will and good pleasure are they in Christ Jesus who is made unto them righteousness. They are made, constituted, reckoned, and dealt with as "the righteousness of God in Him." This is one of my Lord's blessings, the experimental possession of which my soul oftentimes longs for, and oftentimes delights in. What a mercy! To know that I shall stand before my God throughout a long eternity, not with my sins haunting and taunting me, but clothed in His righteousness, adorned with His beauty, lost in His love, and absorbed in His glory.

"When from the dust of death I rise,  
To take my mansion in the skies,  
E'en this shall then be all my plea:  
'JESUS HAS LIVED AND DIED FOR ME.'"

As Christ, my great High Priest, is revealed to me and in me by the Holy Ghost, He sweetly breathes His covenant blessing upon me, and my heart rejoices in the experience of pardon through His blood, and justification through Himself, my glorious righteousness. But I want still more. I desire to enter daily into covenant relationship and communion with His Father and Mine. This I find in His eternal Sonship, for upon this the eternal relationship of the children to the Father is founded. By Him and in Him we were predestinated unto the adoption of children. We know and enjoy this relationship by the Spirit of adoption which cries in me when I cannot cry myself, "Abba, Father." But my want of spiritual blessings is never at an end. Sometimes I am troubled with the hardness of my heart. I am oftentimes distressed because of the accursed indifference to the things of God existing in my mind. I am greatly concerned because I am not found more frequently within the pages of God's blessed Book, feeding upon the precious and priceless revelation He there gives of Himself as the Father of His people, the Saviour of the body, and the Sustainer of the Church. I long for the experience of His fear in my heart, and sigh for the possession of those new covenant mercies so blessedly set before us in Jer. xxxii. 38—40: "And they shall be My people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good: but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." I pray for the experience of His own faith in me, for I find that my

believing is but unbelief at the best. At such seasons He graciously reveals Himself to me as the One who trusted and believed for me, and as He communicates His own trust and confidence to my longing heart, His voice of love inspires my spirit with the precious words, "The LORD bless thee."

My thirsting spirit seeks for closer communion with a God of love, and for a sweet foretaste of that eternity of love to which He is taking us. I look within, but find it not. I mingle with the saints of God, and see the God-given tears sparkle in loving eyes, and the shining of faces anointed with the oil of gladness. I long for the same, but I am cold and dead, and in deeper depths than these, I sometimes sigh,

" 'Tis a point I long to know  
(Oft it causes anxious thought),  
Do I love the Lord, or no?  
Am I His, or am I not?"

I want to experience the shedding abroad of God's love in my heart by the Holy Ghost given unto me, that I may be privileged to say without presumption, "I love Him because He first loved me." This can only be in the revelation of Christ in me, as my great High Priest, saying, "The LORD bless thee," and "In blessing I will bless thee." May it be your lot and mine, during the few remaining days of this year, and throughout the year which is to come, sweetly to experience His presence, and rejoice in the possession of those spiritual blessings which flow through Him alone, and are brought home to the heart by His blessed Spirit.

" May the grace of Christ our Saviour,  
And the Father's boundless love,  
With the Holy Spirit's favour,  
Rest upon us from above!  
Thus may we abide in union  
With each other and the Lord;  
And possess in sweet communion  
Joys which earth cannot afford."

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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MY TIMES, NOT MINE, BUT GOD'S.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JANUARY 5TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"My times are in Thy hand."—Psalm xxxi. 15.

THIS is the language of David, and also of His great and glorious Antitype. In the 5th verse we find the very words with which the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" yielded up His spirit into the hands of His God and Father: "Into Thine hand I commit My spirit." (See Luke xxiii. 46.) Yes, these were the very words with which the Surety of the covenant, the Father's righteous Servant, ended His ministry here upon earth, and found sweet deliverance from that curse and condemnation laid upon Him by the Father, and borne by Him so meekly for those whom He loved so well. I love to look at the book of Psalms with Christ revealed in them as the Speaker—not isolated, but in association, companionship, and fellowship with His poor, weak brethren in the wilderness. In the dying words of my Master I hear the language of blessed assurance ascending from the hearts of those "who through fear of death have been all their lifetime subject to bondage." In these words I behold the humble confidence of the poor trembling child of God when he is brought to the wind up of his doubts, fears, and anxieties, when he comes to the close of all time changes, and an unknown and oft-dreaded eternity presents itself before him, then, by the same Spirit which animated the great and glorious Head on Calvary, he will be enabled to sigh, if not to say, "Father, into Thy hand I commit my spirit." It is an unspeakable privilege to be thus guided by God the ever-blessed Spirit into a right apprehension of JEHOVAH'S mind and will concerning His people as breathed in the prayers and petitions recorded in this book of Psalms. It is here we find



ourselves in living identification with our gracious Forerunner who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, and who at this moment possesses that place of bliss and blessedness up yonder which the Father has appointed for us to fill through all eternity.

It is ours this morning, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of the blessed Spirit, to look at the few words of the text in the light of their context, and in the order in which they flow from the hearts of the living members of that one body which receives all influence, power, mind, and motion from its living and exalted Head, Christ Jesus. Look at the words thus—

I.—A PRIVILEGED PERSON—"My."

II.—HIS CHANGING PERIODS—"Times."

III.—HIS PRESENT EXPERIENCE—"Are."

IV.—A SECURE POSITION—"In."

V.—A GRACIOUS PROVIDER—"Thy."

VI.—A PRECIOUS METAPHOR—"Hand."

"My times are in Thy hand."

I.—A PRIVILEGED PERSON—"My." Who is this person speaking under this personal pronoun "*My*?" It is the Lord Jesus Christ as the Forerunner of His people.

"Jesus, the glorious Head of grace,  
Knows every saint's peculiar case;  
What sorrows by their souls are borne.  
And how for sin they daily mourn."

He is now in the presence of the Father for them, and gives them the assurance by the power of His Spirit, that as He is, so are they in the Father's esteem. The Father having given Him authority over them, and rule over all things for them, He graciously arranges and orders all their anxieties, changes, perplexities, and sorrows for the display of the glory of the Father's grace, and for their present good and ultimate blessedness. We will look at this personal pronoun "*My*" in the light of that experience detailed in the preceding portion of the Psalm. The Psalmist is not lost in a crowd; he is not hidden in a throng; he is brought out from the multitude into fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings. Read the first verse: "In Thee, O LORD, do I put my trust." Here we have a privileged person trusting. None but a soul in experimental oneness with a trusting Christ can honestly say this. And you may depend upon it, no spiritually-living creature, no true-born child of God in union with Christ, will talk about his own trust, his own confidence, his own faith, or his own believing. Such fleshly faith is proclaimed in every Arminian synagogue, it is bellowed out by every fulsome free-willer, and your circumcised ears are offended at the corners of the streets with those discordant sounds,

"I do believe! I will believe  
That Jesus died for me!"

As such fleshly jargon grates upon my ears I cannot help the ejaculation, O what a lie! This may shock some of you, but you may set it down to my Calvinistic crudeness, or to my free-grace infirmity. Yet, I glory in such crudeness, and I delight in such infirmity. But to the point. Only those who are brought experimentally to understand that precious Second of Hebrews can truly say, "In Thee, O LORD, do I put my trust." Turn to Hebrews ii.—you cannot turn too often to it—and begin to read at ver. 11: "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." In relationship all of one origin, one covenant, one Father, one family, and all anointed with the same Spirit; "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." To look at them apart from Himself He might well be ashamed to own them at all. "Saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee." It is of God's great mercy that we, who worship a Three-One God within the walls of Grove chapel, enjoy Christ in praise, Christ in prayer, and Christ in preaching. He is the Leader of our praises. He is the Conductor of the prayers written upon our heart by His blessed Spirit. He is the Preacher by the power of the Holy Ghost to the hearts of His own elect brethren. I try to sing, I fail; He sings for me. I try to preach, I stammer; He preaches for me. I try to pray, I know not how;—

"He prays the prayer within me  
I cannot ask or think."

Ah, my dear friends, we can no more pray as we ought than we can scale the heights of heaven without His own sweet Spirit of grace anointing, bedewing, and sealing our hearts with the truths of covenant love and blood. "And again, *I will put My trust in Him.*" That is Christ personal, it is Christ mystical. It is Christ before the throne, and Christ in the hearts of His trusting members. It is Christ in covenant, Christ in condescension, and Christ in communication. It is Christ trusting for me, Christ trusting with me, and Christ trusting *in* me. Before His Father He stands as the Head of all His elect members, and communicates to us all the life, love, light, and liberty we enjoy. Do we love? It is because He blesses us with His love. Do we hope? It is because He is in us the Hope of glory. Do we trust? It is by Him who first trusted for us. Have we faith? It is the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Let us have *that* according to the Scriptures: "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). That is personal appreciation. In union with Christ, David could say, "In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Thy righteousness." That is spiritual confidence, not fleshly impudence. He says, "In Thee, O LORD, do I put my trust;" but he does not say, I am free from fears. He trusted; but it was

that he might not be ashamed. He trusted God; he distrusted himself. He knew the material he was made of, and that left to himself only for a moment, he would think, look, speak, and act in every way but that which becomes a saint. Knowing this, he prays, "Deliver me in Thy righteousness." The carnal Christian will say, "If a sinner believes, he ought to know that he is delivered." Such is the fleshly reasoning of all high-flying professors; but the soul in communion with a once-suffering and sorrowing Christ sings and sighs,—

"The more Thy glories stike mine eye,  
The humbler I shall lie."

The more I am brought to experience what Christ is for me, with me, and in me, the humbler will be the views I shall have of myself. If JEHOVAH-JESUS has delivered me, it is His pledge that I shall experience further deliverances. You see this in 2 Cor. i. 10: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." We see the same in 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18: "And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

But we must pass on. Look at the 2nd verse: "Bow down thine ear to Me." Here we see a believer at a felt distance from his God, not in the enjoyment of communion with the God of his salvation. He is longing for fellowship, but enjoys it not. He longs to pour into the ears of his God and Father the tale of his sorrows, the confession of his sins, and the acknowledgment of his infirmities; but clouds and darkness hide His face, while the soul in the depths cries out, "Bow down Thine ear unto me." In these words we have the expression of felt humility. It is not a desire to be lifted up to God, but for God to come down to the soul. "Deliver me speedily." From what? From the awful unbelief which distresses me—from the accursed indifference which seizes me—from the evil influences which surround me—from the devilish temptations which annoy me, and, most of all, from my wretched self. "Be Thou my strong Rock, for a house of defence to save me." The Psalmist was saved, yet he prayed for salvation; he was defended, yet he prayed for defence. Salvation experimentally understood is simply a succession of deliverances day by day and moment by moment in the spiritual history of the child of God. In the 3rd verse we read, "For Thy name's sake, lead me, and guide me." This prayer flowed forth under a sense of that expressed in Isaiah liii. 6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have every one turned to his own way." It is true concerning every one within these walls, we all love to have as much of our own way as we possibly can. But I assure you, if I am allowed to have my own way, it is sure to prove one of

perversity, and will wring many a sigh from my heart, with the desire expressed in the language of the Psalmist: "Make Thy way plain before my face." The captive sighs and cries, "Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me." This is the net laid round about the pathway of the child of God by Satan, sin, and self. Ofttimes we experience the perplexities of the net into which God in His providence has brought us (Psalm lxvi. 11). Israel was like a wild bull in a net, and Ephraim like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. The child of God left to himself will kick and plunge against JEHOVAH'S dispensations and Satan's machinations; and as sin becomes hateful, and corruptions seethe and surge, the cry ascends to Him who alone can deliver: "Pull my feet out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for Thou art my strength."

In the 6th verse he says, "I have hated them that regard lying vanities." Is that a fact in the experience of the living child of God? It is; but it is not so in the experience of the general lover. You may depend upon it, the universal lover is lacking in spiritual chastity, and possesses no real charity at all. I think it was Archbishop Usher who said, "*Charity to the soul is the soul of charity.*" If we have been brought into a true understanding and spiritual apprehension of the love of the brethren for God's sake, for Christ's sake, and for truth's sake, because they are eternally loved of the Father, the purchase of His dear Son's blood, and the conquest of His blessed Spirit, we shall "hate them that regard lying vanities." We cannot help it. Do you think I can love a man who professes to preach God's Gospel, and almost every word from his lips is a lie of Satan? Do you think I can love one who calls into question the Godhead of my blessed Lord and Master? Do you think I can love the oily-mouthed wretch who declares there is as much efficacy in the blood of a cock-chicken as there is in the blood of God's suffering Lamb, my glorious Saviour? Tell me! Can I love such a man as that? Never! I could as soon love the devil. "I have hated them that regard lying vanities," said the Psalmist, and so says Thomas Bradbury, as he is brought into close communion with Him who loved him and bought him with His blood. May I be kept there with a spirit of intense separation from those who corrupt God's Gospel and foul the streams of Gospel truth which flow in this blessed Book, and which alone can refresh the weary souls of Zion's pilgrims when they come to that dread spot where flesh and heart fail, and nothing but Christ will do. "I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD," to save me, guide me, and guard me. "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy." What a strange blending of opposite feelings and exercises! Paradoxes abound and are presented to the mind daily in true Christian experience. The experience of the living child of God is chameleon-like, changing according to the

light or shade in which it dwells. We see this in the various verses of this Psalm. In the 1st, the Psalmist trusts and prays for deliverance. In the 2nd, he is in the depths and at a felt distance from God. In the 3rd, as a wanderer he prays for leading and guidance. In the 4th, he is cramped in a net and cries for liberty. In the 6th verse, he expresses his hatred of those who regard lying vanities. In the 7th, he resolves to be glad and rejoice in the Lord, assured that He has considered his trouble and known his soul in adversities. In this we have the assurance that every trial, temptation, and trouble that our souls can experience, were all considered in covenant before the worlds were formed, and are now weighed out to us in mercy and love. Our gracious God will not exercise us with the weight of a feather more than He will give strength to bear. An old proverb says, "*The last straw breaks the camel's back*;" but, blessed be God, He has no last straw for the backs of His poor children. He has considered their troubles and considers them still. That is a sweet sentence "Thou hast known my soul in adversities." Notice that word "*known*." It is not that He has taken cognizance, but that He has approved of my soul in the fearful hour of temptation. He has looked with appreciation upon my soul when writing bitter things against itself, and could not speak one approving word concerning anything springing from it. Look at the 9th verse. In misery the Psalmist cries for mercy: "Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly." This is a figurative expression denoting the trouble, perplexity, and distress of the whole man. "For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing." This is the language of a saved, redeemed, delivered, and highly-favoured man, yet his experience is, "My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed." Here we see, first, our Lord Jesus Christ with all our iniquity made His, and all His members troubled because of their iniquity, which cost Him so much.

Mark well the 11th verse: "I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me." There is a pretty character for you. Have you ever known such a one? I have. My exercised spirit oft times sought communion with one who lived in Manchester, but who is now at home with his Lord. I allude to my old friend and brother in the beaten track of tribulation, Thomas Simmons. Many times, in weariness of flesh and of spirit, have I sought his abode in York Place, to be refreshed with the outpouring of his exercised soul (always with God's open Book before him), as he honestly expressed what God had done for him in judgment as well as in mercy. He was not ashamed of his Lord in whatsoever company he might be found. His enemies reproached him. His neighbours shunned him. His own acquaintance, ay, his

own relatives stood in awe of him, and thought him too hard, too harsh, too severe, too bitter. Was he? Yes, he was for fleshly compromisers, but not for Thomas. He was frequently like a broken vessel, feelingly cast out, and subject to the slander of many. He could say in truth, "I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my (spiritual) life. But." That is a precious, experimental "*But*." "But I trusted in Thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God." From these fourteen verses you see the character of the privileged, yet exercised, person of the text. Know ye anything of feeling oneness with him? It cannot be said of him what David declares concerning the reprobate: "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God" (Psa. lv. 19). This is a man with changes, who knows something of darkness as well as of light. Sin is his grief, salvation his gladness. Condemnation he dreads, justification he delights in. He experiences the bitterness of death, and the sweetness of life, mourning as well as rejoicing, sorrow as well joy. We now will consider—

II.—HIS CHANGING PERIODS expressed in the word "*times*." It was a blessed privilege for us to sing this morning,

" My times are in Thy hand,  
My God, I wish them there."

That is an apparent contradiction. First, there is the statement. "My times are in Thy hand;" then the desire, "My God, I wish them there." Blessed be His name, He has put all our times and seasons in His own power (Acts i. 7); "and hath determined the times before appointed" (Acts xvii. 26). What times? "My times of sorrow and of joy," of darkness and light. The time for the enjoyment of His presence, and also for mourning His absence. Look at that declaration of the wise man in Eccles. iii. 1—8: "To every *thing* there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die." Not one can be born or die one moment before or after the appointed time. "A time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is planted*. A time to kill, and a time to heal: a time to break down, and a time to build up. A time to weep"—for God's weepers—"and a time to laugh"—for those to whom the joy of the Lord is their strength. "A time to mourn"—for the mourners in Zion—"and a time to dance." What dancing is this? It is the dancing of the heart with gratitude for covenant services. "A time to cast away stones." Here we see JEHOVAH scattering His precious stones of election-love amid the ruins of creation. "And a time to gather stones together." These are living stones gathered together in one and built up a spiritual house (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5). "A time to embrace, and a time to cease from embracing. A time to get"—or, as it reads in the margin, *to seek*, and in the time of seeking to find—"and a time to lose" the sweet sense of His

presence and His love. "A time to keep" that which God has graciously communicated to me, "and a time to cast away," which, alas! oftentimes I do. "A time to rend, and a time to sew: a time to keep silence, and a time to speak: a time to love, and a time to hate: a time of war, and a time of peace." See! You may look; but there are times when you cannot smile and times when you cannot frown. There are times when we cannot do anything but laugh. But what is our laughter? Not the laughter of the fool, which is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, spasmodic; but that expressed by my dear friend and father, Patrick Joseph O'Leary, when I was conversing with him upon the precious work of Christ for His people, and the gracious work of the Holy Ghost in them, he said, "*That makes my heart laugh.*" Such a time is one of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

"*My times.*" The time, when, as a mere speck upon the face of creation, I appeared in the busy town of Manchester, was in His hand who doeth as He will and giveth no account of His matters. The time for every youthful trial and for every God-given triumph; the time for the experience of my ignorance, and for the communication of the knowledge of my God and Saviour; the time when I should be brought into association with all whom I have known and trusted; the time for every disappointment and distress, and the time for every deliverance and delight; all ordered in infinite wisdom, and brought about in fondest love. I feel it was of God's mercy that my mother should take me when she did, and cause my heart to thrill with her sayings and songs of redeeming love. That was a time I shall ever remember on the 15th day of April, 1839, when I sat by her side, I looked in her face, but she noticed me not. Her eyes were closed, never to open again in this world. Her lips moved. She sang:—

"And am I born to die,  
To lay this body down?  
And must my trembling spirit fly  
Into a world unknown?"

That same night the mother left her boy in a cold and cruel world; but that time was in His gracious hand, and up to this, every step has been paved with mercy. He had purposes of grace to manifest to me, and He fixed the time when I should be brought into association and communion with those who are so near and dear to Him by electing love, redeeming blood, and regenerating grace, when I should experience the felicity of friendship with the saints, and enjoy the lovingkindness and tenderness of my God. And can I forget His well-ordered time, when, under the gallery in old St. Jude's, Manchester, I heard His words spoken from the lips of His own servant—words of covenant love, words of spiritual life, abiding words to my heart? Never! Dear old John Kent yet sings in the hearts of God's people:—

"Th' appointed time rolls on apace,  
Not to propose, but call by grace;  
*Give a new heart*, renew the will,  
And turn the feet to Zion's hill."

He has the time fixed when He will meet me and reveal to me the blessings of His kingdom, the provisions of His table, and the love of His heart. He knew the time when, in His good providence, I should be brought to the pastorate of His flock in Grove chapel—a pastorate distinguished by perplexities, trials, and troubles, and, by the shaking of the fan in the hand of JEHOVAH-JESUS, purging this floor from Arminian chaff and free-will rubbish, and all to bring His saints into blessed association with Himself, causing them to glory alone in the one theme of His eternal, predestinating, electing, redeeming, regenerating, preserving, and glorifying love. He fixed the time that I should come this morning to open my lips and deal out truths most precious to you who are eternally loved of my God, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, regenerated by His blessed Spirit, and brought into hallowed fellowship with His scattered and peeled, yet gathered and healed, ones. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). It is here we are loved and love again, and all other love is but fleshly folly. He arranged and brought about the times of the year that is passed and gone for ever; times of hope and times of self-despair; times of anxiety and care when we watched over those we love in hope and expectation of their being preserved to us in life and honour, and times of bitter disappointment when sorrow has told its sad tale in burdened spirits. Some of us can remember the time when we witnessed the passing out of time into eternity of those who were so near and so dear to us, and, as they trod the path unknown to us, we wept at our feeling helplessness to minister one drop of consolation to their exercised spirits. We have had our times of spiritual joy and refreshment from the presence of the Lord. Blessings, praises, and all honour for ever rest upon the head of our adorable Emmanuel, we have had our times of love within these walls, in that schoolroom at our Friday evening prayer meetings, and at our Tuesday evening gatherings. And here let me tell you again, that some of you know not what you miss by your absence; but there are some here this morning who can bless and thank him for His goodness to us on these occasions.

"*My times.*" The times when my weary head aches and throbs; when I appear to be a bundle of unstrung nerves, and feel myself not fit company for the poorest dog under the table. Yes, I am oftentimes like Ephraim in my feelings—"a cake not turned." This is a strange condition: the devil I hate, man I shun, and God appears to be in the land of far distances; but all these times are in His hand. Look still further. The



times when pain, disease, and sickness have been felt in some parts of these mortal bodies of ours, producing gloomy forebodings and painful apprehensions as to the issue. I have been foolish enough to wonder what will be the nature and amount of the sufferings through which I must pass; but my comfort and confidence is this: I know that all my headaches and heart-aches, all my pains of body and anxieties of mind, are in His gracious hands, and must work together for my good and for His glory. The time and manner of my death He has reserved to Himself, and the blessed realisation of this gives me a gracious lift out of that bondage through fear of death, which many of God's children experience all their lives long. In His time I shall cease to sin and suffer, and shall for ever have done with sorrow; then, lost in God-head, love, and blood, my ransomed spirit will be swallowed up in unceasing praise before Him.

III.—A PRESENT EXPERIENCE—"Are." That word speaks of the present, not of the past, nor of the future. I love to speak of present tense-realities, for you may rest assured that oftentimes when my spirit is overwhelmed, past mercies will not come in review for my comfort and consolation, neither will surmisings as to the future improve my state of mind. The Psalmist says: "My *times* are in Thy hand," while the promise by Moses is, "As thy *days*, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. xxxiii. 25). This promise is often misquoted thus: "As thy *day*, so shall thy strength be." But you see the word "*days*" is in the plural number, so is the word "*times*" of our text. My times, not my time, of sojourning upon earth; but my times, my seasons, and my changes. I said that I love to look at present-tense realities. I love to enjoy them in union with my great and glorious Lord who knows nothing of past or future with me, but holds me, and all things concerning me, in His loving hands, eternally and unceasingly. With Him there is an eternal NOW. Turn with me to a few portions which God has made very precious to my soul. 1 Peter v. 7: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He" *has cared*? No! *Will care*? No! The word is in the present tense, and will be all through the wilderness journey: "He *careth* for you." Why? Because all the times of His people *are* in His hand. We cannot think of a period in time or in eternity when their times were not in His hand. Again, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). It is not *has cleansed*, will cleanse, but *cleanseth*. It is an ever-present cleansing as long as a redeemed one is in the sinful body. From the sins of my unregeneracy I am cleansed, and the sins of the days of my regeneracy need cleansing in atoning blood. See! It cleanseth the sins of the pulpit and the sins of the pew, the sins which meet the gaze of men, and those I am sensible of in my moments of retirement and devotion. Look again at 1 John iv. 18: "Perfect love *casteth* out fear." It is not *hath cast out*, will

cast out, but "*casteth out fear.*" What is this perfect love? Read verse 16: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." This is the perfection of love. "Herein is love with us"—not our love, but the love of the covenant Three to us—"made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love." The perfect love of God, shed abroad in the heart, casteth out fear. If this is true this morning, it will be so through time and through a never-ending eternity.

IV.—A SECURE POSITION—"In." "My times are *in*"—not toward, not near, not at a distance, but "*in Thy hand.*" Not even a hair's breadth from Him, which precludes all possibility of failure or disappointment. *In* His hand before the worlds were framed. *In* His hand when He wrote my name in the Lamb's Book of Life. *In* His hand when He arranged and settled all my circumstances and states, sorrows and sufferings, perplexities and privations, blessings and benefits. My *salvation* certain *in* the purpose of the Father, secure *in* the person of the Son, and sure *in* the power of the Holy Ghost. That precious preposition *in* shows that no part of my salvation is deputed to the hand of another. But this leads us to notice,—

V.—A GRACIOUS PROVIDER—"Thy." Look at Him as He is revealed from the commencement of the Psalm. In verse 1, He is JEHOVAH the Deliverer, Defender, and Delight of His people. JEHOVAH my Provider. JEHOVAH my Physician. JEHOVAH my Security. JEHOVAH my Peace. JEHOVAH my Righteousness. JEHOVAH my Companion. JEHOVAH *for* me. JEHOVAH *with* me. JEHOVAH *in* me. Look at verse 2: JEHOVAH stooping, sheltering, and saving. Verse 3: JEHOVAH leading and guiding. Verse 4: JEHOVAH liberating and strengthening. Verse 5: JEHOVAH redeeming from sin, sorrow, and suffering, and landing His people safe in eternal glory. Verse 7: JEHOVAH considering and appreciating His children. Verse 14: JEHOVAH the confidence of His child: "But I trusted in Thee, O LORD; I said, Thou art my God. My times are in Thy hand."

VI.—A PRECIOUS METAPHOR—"Hand." This appears to us in many parts of God's written Word. In one place it means *the purpose* of JEHOVAH. All my times are in His purpose. All in the will! All in the will! See Acts iv. 28: "For to do whatsoever *Thy hand* and Thy counsel determined before to be done." It also means *His power*. Turn to Psalm xcv. 4, 5: "In *His hand* are the deep places of the earth. . . . and *His hands* formed the dry land." It also means *His providence*. See Psalm cxlv. 16: "Thou openest *Thine hand* and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." It also denotes *His protection*. Turn to John x. 28, 29: "They shall never perish, neither shall

any pluck them out of *My hand*. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of *My Father's hand*." Look still further, and in many parts of that blessed book of Nehemiah, it signifies *God's presence*. Turn to chapter ii. 18: "The *hand of my God* which was good upon me."

Now, which of us can say this morning that the hand of our God has not been on us for good? He has provided for us, protected us, and preserved us. His patient grace has borne with our manners these many years in the wilderness, His preserving care opened our eyes this morning to see the light of another day, His providing mercy has spread our tables with the bounties of His hand, and we have experienced some little of the love of His heart. Can we look back upon the way He has brought us, and murmur at His leadings? What answer can we give to the question of Jesus, Lacked ye anything? Well, I can say, No, Lord, not one thing. In the blessed realisation and sweet experience of this precious fact, we may say individually, "JEHOVAH," in whose hands my times are, "JEHOVAH is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

May the Lord add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

### HYMN SUNG AFTER THE SERMON.

SOVEREIGN Ruler of the skies,  
Ever gracious, ever wise;  
All my times are in Thy hand,  
All events at Thy command.

His decree who formed the earth,  
Fixed my first and second birth;  
Parents, native place, and time,  
All appointed were by Him.

Times of sickness; times of health;  
Times of penury and wealth;  
Times of trial and of grief;  
Times of triumph and relief.

Times the tempter's power to prove:  
Times to taste the Saviour's love:  
All must come, and last, and end,  
As shall please my heavenly Friend.

Plagues and deaths around me fly;  
Till He bids I cannot die;  
Not a single shaft can hit,  
Till the God of love sees fit.

RYLAND.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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THE DAY—THE SONG—AND THE LAND.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JANUARY 12TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah.”—Isaiah xxvi. 1.

“HE that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread” is the declaration of Divine inspiration by Solomon (Prov. xxviii. 19). This is blessedly true concerning the land of Divine revelation and spiritual promise. He who tills that land shall have plenty of bread. The quotation of this portion need cause no alarm, for it is not my intention to diverge from my loved employ of preaching God’s free-grace, to lay any burdens upon you either light or heavy. Burdens sufficient are experienced by Zion’s pilgrims who are travelling to that glorious rest which God has provided for them; so there is no necessity for the ministers of the New Testament, those who are “the messengers of the Churches and the glory of Christ,” to lay burdens upon the tried and tempted children of the living God. That is a precious Scripture in Psalm lvii. 2: “I will cry unto God Most High that performeth all things for me.” The Worker, the Tiller, the Husbandman is God, according to the word of our Lord to His sorrowing disciples: “My Father is the Husbandman” (John xv. 1). He sows His seeds of new covenant truth wherever He wills, and they are carried by the heavenly Wind, His own blessed Spirit, into those plots of good ground of His own preparing, where He will cause fruits of righteousness to abound by Jesus Christ. It has pleased Him also to sow light for the righteous in many portions of His blessed Word (Psalm xcvi. 11). New covenant truth is couched beneath the letter of the Word, to be brought to sight in His own set time of favour for the instruction and edification of His own people. Yes, in many portions of the written Word

seeds of Divine truth are sown which shall yield abundant fruit for the comfort and establishment of true Zionists. From these precious portions seed shall be conveyed to the ground of God's preparing, which He calls "An honest and good heart" (Luke viii. 15). This is a heart of His own giving—a heart which has experienced the piercing power of the ploughshare of the Divine law—a heart that knows something of the crushing power of the harrow of tribulation breaking up and preparing the ground for the seed of God. Sometimes He sows, and in a comparatively short space of time His fruit appears. At other times He sows, and as the Divine Husbandman He patiently waits for the fruit which shall abound by His own skill, wisdom, and power. We have a nice little patch of new covenant ground laid out before us in the portion I have read for our meditation this morning, and if it be His gracious will to reveal to us the precious things which can only be brought forth by the Sun, we must of necessity retire from this place with rejoicing hearts, blessing and thanking Him for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation by whom we are privileged to enjoy the presence and preciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three things in the text which we will notice—

I.—THE DAY—"In that day."

II.—THE SONG—"Shall this song be sung."

III.—THE LAND—"In the land of Judah."

I.—THE DAY—"In that day." We read of many days in God's blessed Word. Turn to Gen. i. 5: "And the evening and the morning were the first day." This consisted of twenty-four hours. The evening being named first conveys a fund of spiritual instruction to the Spirit-taught children of the living God. In Psalm lxxiv. 16, the Psalmist says, "The day is Thine, the night also is Thine: Thou hast prepared the light and the sun." Look at Psalm civ. 19—23: "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth His going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." Those who are brought into spiritual oneness with Christ in His sufferings know something of the experimental realities contained in that Psalm. When the Sun of Righteousness descends beneath our spiritual horizon, we are distressed and annoyed with the creepings forth of gloomy fears, dreary doubts, accursed unbelief, and wretched indifference. We also know the prowlings of conceit and pride, deceit and falsehood. Yes, we know something of those evil beasts described in Gal. v. 19—21. Look over them at your leisure, and if you are guided by God the ever-blessed Spirit, you will know and feel that your wretched flesh can produce nothing better.

As we look through the blessed Book, we notice the record

of many memorable days. That was a glorious one when JEHOVAH by His mighty hand and outstretched arm brought His ancient people Israel out of Egypt. "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, *even the self-same day it came to pass*, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt" (Exodus xii. 41 and 51). The great day of atonement was a day of rest and rejoicing to all true Israelites (Lev. xxv. 9). That was a remarkable day when God by His mighty hand delivered the Jews from the crafty plottings of cruel Haman. "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. And in every province and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast, and a good day" (Esther viii. 16, 17). That was a momentous day when our blessed Lord and Saviour presented Himself before the powers of darkness, bearing His people's sins into the land of never-ending forgetfulness, and crying from the ends of the earth, "IT IS FINISHED!" Salvation was an accomplished fact—Satan was defeated—sin was put away—heaven was filled with rejoicing—hell with dismay—and to the elect of God throughout all time was secured, perfection in Christ, acceptance in the Beloved, and completeness in Him. There was another day, brought before us in Psalm cxviii. 24, from which Dr. Watts composed his precious hymn,—

"This is the day the Lord hath made,  
He calls the hours His own;  
Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,  
And praise surround the throne."

But the hymn restricts the truth of God to one of the seven days of the week. Look at the words of inspiration: "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." What day is that? Is it a period of time confined within the short space of twenty-four hours? Nay! It is that day, dispensation, or era existing from the moment Christ rose again from the dead as the living and accepted Surety of the covenant, to His coming again to take His people home to Himself. It is this dispensation of grace during which His power and glory shall be revealed in the hearts of His people, drawing therefrom prayers for mercies designed and praises for blessings bestowed.

As we look through the prophecies, especially those of the minor prophets, we shall find these expressions oftentimes: "That day," "The day of the LORD," or, "That great day of the LORD." In each case the expression must be governed, understood, and explained by its preceding and succeeding context. Many of these portions are shrouded in mystery, for many of them refer to circumstances that are passed, or, it may be, to events which shall yet come to pass. If we look for a literal interpretation in many of these Scriptures, we shall find

ourselves in a labyrinth of confusion and uncertainty. But it is ours to look at them in a higher, a heavenly, and spiritual light. Every prophecy given to us contains a glorious spiritual promise of JEHOVAH to His eternally-loved, elect, and redeemed people. When we are brought by the Holy Spirit into a right understanding and apprehension of revealed truth, we receive that which teaches, edifies, and establishes our souls in covenant verities. We will notice a few Scriptures where this expression, "In that day," occurs. In one place we see a day of trouble; in another, a day of deliverance; in one, a day of sorrow; in another, a day of rejoicing; in one, a day of darkness; in another, a day of light; in one, a day of distress and despair; in another, a day of salvation and delight. In Isaiah ii. 12—17, the day is one of trouble, anxiety, and perplexity: "For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted *in that day*." Turn to chap. iv. 1, and there you will see a description of a dreadful day! "And *in that day* seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach." This is what I have oftentimes styled, "The Perfection of Hypocrisy," and this very perfection of hypocrisy reigns on every hand in this day of flaming profession. We see those who will feed upon fleshly free-will husks, gird themselves with the rags of their own fancied righteousness, and be called Christians, after the name of Christ, while their hearts are full of enmity against Christ, His salvation, His truth, and His people. All this is because it is anything but respectable not to be considered a Christian. Come to chap. xiii. 6: "Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand: it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty."

You will find a very remarkable expression in Jer. xxx. 7: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." Now Jacob was dead, buried, and lost to sight many long years before Jeremiah uttered this prophecy. The Jacob of this prophecy is a representative character, found in those persons spoken of in Mal. iii. 6: "For I am the LORD, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Turn to Joel ii. 11, 31: "And the LORD shall utter His voice before His army: for His camp is very great: for He is strong that executeth His word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible: and who can abide it? The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come." Some of you may be ready to say, Oh! you are leading us to portions of prophecies with which we have nothing

whatever to do. Do not be too rash in your conclusion, my friends, for it is my desire in every quotation I make to find something therein with which I have to do, and with which JEHOVAH may have to do with you in the testimony flowing from this exercised heart of mine. If you will look at Acts ii. 16—21, you will see how Peter, by the Holy Ghost, quoted this very prophecy to prove the descent of the Holy Ghost in His convincing power upon the three thousand, who, in consternation and almost wild despair, cried out, "What shall we do?" Mark you! "The great and notable day of the LORD *had* come" to them. Eternal realities stared them in the face. God, in His hatred and abhorrence of sin, was revealed to their wondering hearts. JEHOVAH, in His fury, indignation, and wrath, not on Gospel ground, but on that of law with its curses and condemnation, occupied their despairing spirits. Convinced and law-condemned sinners know by painful experience that *that* day is great, so that there is none like unto it, that it is the day of Jacob's trouble: yet, blessed be God, he shall be saved out of it. Know ye anything feelingly of such a day as this?

Amos, in his fifth chapter, 20th verse, says: "Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark and no brightness in it?" Tell me, ye who know anything of the convicting power of God the ever-blessed Spirit, Was not that a dark day when He brought before you in terrible review the sins and follies of your past life? Ay, indeed it was. Also when He gave you to feel the plague of your own heart, the enmity of your carnal mind against God, and the rebelliousness of your whole nature against Him, despising His Word, discarding His authority, and calling into question the glory, honour, dignity, and sovereignty of His Christ. Then you could see and feel sin to be exceeding sinful, and dreaded the terrors of a sin-hating God, knowing that you deserved to suffer His frown and fiery indignation in your own persons, and that left to yourselves there was no standing for you in His sacred and solemn presence. So it is when the blessed Spirit comes home and reveals the matchless purity of JEHOVAH on old covenant ground. Dark, gloomy, and terrible is the experience of the awakened sinner, so that Amos might well say, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it to you? the day of the LORD is darkness and not light." Now turn with me to that glorious new covenant chapter, Zeph. iii., which has often been a precious one to me. But notice first of all chap. i. 14—18: "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers." It is the day of



the LORD'S wrath, from which neither silver, nor gold, nor any of earth's productions can ever deliver them. Now come to chap. iii. 16: "In that day." This is the day spoken of in our text. "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not." Turn to Gal. iv. 26, and you see the Jerusalem spoken of: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Paul speaks of it in Heb. xii. 22 as "the heavenly Jerusalem." Christ calls it, "new Jerusalem" (Rev. iii. 12), while John speaks of it thus, "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. xxi. 2). In the day when Jesus comes with His sweet "Fear thou not," the inhabitant of the spiritual Jerusalem shall experience deliverance from terror, doubt, and dread. "And to Zion." What is Zion? The people of God whom He has loved and redeemed. These He beautifies and adorns, making of them a glorious monument to show forth His grace, beauty, and power. These are all *true believers*. I do not say *believers*, for that title only occurs twice in our New Testament. It is amazing to notice what capital is made of it by flesh-pleasing preachers in the present day. I will tell you honestly and candidly, when I hear a man frequently using the word *believer*, I look at him and wonder where he is drifting to. God's children are set before us in His Book under a variety of titles, and are addressed by every other than that of *believer*. If I were to address you this morning as a congregation of *believers*, I should almost imagine some of you would gnash your teeth with spiritual agony, because you experience in your souls the bitterness of unbelief, your want of trust and confidence in God, while you confess honestly before Him, that, instead of believing, you are more frequently unbelieving, and when you approach Him, it is with the words of the poor man in the Gospel flowing from your exercised heart, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." It is blessed for us to know that all true believers are those who stand in spiritual and experimental union with the great and glorious Head, and are formed by Him into that grand spiritual confederation and association which He styles, Zion. To these He says, "Let not thine hands be slack," or *faint*. The day of deliverance to one is frequently the day of destruction to another. The day of Israel's deliverance was the day of destruction to the Egyptians. See Psa. cxxxvi. 13—15: "To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endureth for ever. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endureth for ever. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endureth for ever." Mercy upon Israel—judgment upon Egypt. But it is ours to see two spiritual opposites experienced by the children of God on the self-same day. A day of darkness, upon which the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness arise. A day of distress, upon which delivering grace is sweetly

experienced. A day of dreary conviction resulting in spiritual regeneration. In the experience of the pangs of the new birth the cry is heard, "What shall we do?" but ere the day closes, gladness and joy of heart are the lot of the children (Acts ii. 37—47). The sound of the midnight earthquake shatters to pieces the very soul of the Philippian jailer, who, rushing in to Paul and Silas, cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" But look at him that same night, he took the two persecuted disciples of the Lord, washed their stripes, made them as comfortable as his loving heart could make them, "and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Acts xvi. 26—34). Yes, the day of the Lord is set before us throughout the Scriptures of truth as one of darkness and light, death and life, distress and deliverance; a day when sin is revealed by the law, and salvation realized by the Gospel through the blood and obedience of Jesus. Notice the day as described in Isa. iv. After a description of the perfection of hypocrisy, it says, "In that day shall the Branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the Fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely." That is Christ in His Divine and human natures. Christ, God-Man, the Saviour and Friend of His Church and people. Not the Saviour of these seven women, these spiritual adulteresses, these wanton hypocrites, and profligate professors; but, "for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy"—all those whom God has separated, selected, elected, chosen—"even everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem," or, as you read in the margin, "*to life in Jerusalem.*"

Turn over the pages of your Bibles to Isa. xxv. 9: "And it shall be said in *that day*, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him." This is the day when death is swallowed up in victory—the victory achieved by our blessed Lord on Calvary's height over sin, death, and hell. The day when He wipes all tears from the faces of His redeemed, and when He takes away the rebuke of His people from off all the earth. The day when He speaks "No condemnation" to their hearts, when no accusation of Satan can prevail against them, and when no weapon formed against them by men or devils can prosper; "In that day it shall be said, Lo, this is our God." Our God in covenant, ordering all things well for us. Our God in redemption, performing all things for us. Our God in regeneration, working all our works in us. "We have waited for Him" through the long day of darkness, gloominess and distress. "He will save us." Notice the spirit of humility that characterizes these waiters. They do not say, He has saved us; but, "He will save us." The fact of His having saved them was to them His pledge that He would continue to save them, for, salvation experimentally realized by the living child of God, is a succession of deliverances from the first throbbings of regeneration to his entrance into

glory. "He will save us: this is the LORD: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest" in blessing upon His people, and in judgment upon His enemies, "and Moab shall be trodden down under Him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill. And He shall spread forth His hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim." To swim, as an expert and strong swimmer cleaves the waves before him, and makes his way by the force of his powerful arm, so JEHOVAH by His own power will have His own way in the midst of all the waves of opposition through which His people have to pass, and with all the surgings and seethings of corruption which His tried and tempted ones are called to endure. "And He shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hand. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall He bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust." This judgment shall be experienced not only by foes, but by friends. It is the day of the Lord when He comes in judgment upon the world inside, as well as upon the world outside. Corrupt and carnal flesh in its enmity to Zion and to Zion's God shall be disposed of by Him in His righteous indignation; while He will deal in judgment with my religious flesh, my consistent flesh, my fleshly experience, and all about me that pertains to the flesh. God will come down in judgment upon it all, lay it low, bring it to the ground, even to the dust.

"*In that day.*" This is the day spoken of by David in Psal. cx. 1—3: "The LORD said unto My Lord." That is, "The LORD said unto my Governor." The Lord Jesus Christ is the Governor and Sovereign here. JEHOVAH the Father said unto Him, "Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." This was accomplished in measure on the day of Pentecost, when our Lord Jesus Christ, risen, ascended, and sitting upon His mediatorial throne, was ruling all things in heaven and earth for His own. There are those who would have us believe that the devil at present reigns over our Lord, and has the advantage of Him. But I don't believe them. You may depend upon it, the Lord Jesus is reigning over all things and causing them to work together for His people's good, so that the devil, with all his craft and subtilty, cannot go beyond the length of of his tether, cannot do anything beyond the bounds of sovereign appointment, and cannot touch even the flesh of God's children contrary to the predestinating purpose of JEHOVAH. He cannot hurt or destroy in any part of God's holy mountain. "The LORD shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion." That is, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which is His power unto salvation to every one that believeth (1 Tim. i. 11; Rom. i. 16). "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies. Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of Thy power." This willingness is caused by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the

Holy Ghost given unto us. *This* "Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8). When the love of God is carried imperceptibly and irresistibly into a redeemed sinner's soul, that is to him the day of JEHOVAH'S power and the day of salvation. Look at that portion in 2 Cor. vi. 2: "For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation." What is the day of salvation? It is not according to that wretched Arminian gloss and free-will perversion of this precious Scripture, which says that "Now is the time for any sinner to repent and turn to God." That will not do for me. When is the day of salvation? From the moment of Christ's entrance into glory "a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins," until the last bone of His body is caught up to reign with Him in glory. This is the accepted time. This is the day of salvation. "In that day," as long as Christ appears before the throne of His Father on the ground of accomplished redemption, songs of rejoicing shall be heard in the tabernacles of the righteous. Sighs also shall be heard from the desert land in the day of darkness and distress, but by the power and grace of the glorious Liberator at God's right hand all Zion's mourners shall be delivered therefrom.

. II.—THE SONG—"Shall this song be sung." It is cruel mockery to sing songs to sad hearts, and it is equally so to sing songs of sweet deliverance to souls experiencing spiritual captivity. You see this in Psalm cxxxvii. 1—4: "By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." That is not simply the record of an historical fact concerning God's ancient Israel, but it describes an experimental reality in the history of all God's spiritual Israel, ay, of every Israelite indeed in this place who has experienced the darkness of conviction and the dawning of love "*in that day*." Such know something of weeping because of felt distance from Him they love, and can enter experimentally into the spirit of this precious hymn:—

"When I listen to Thy Word  
In Thy temple cold and dead;  
When I cannot see Thee, Lord,  
All faith's little daylight fled,—  
Sun of glory,  
Beam again around my head."

That is the day we long and wait for. But let us look at the Psalm. "We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." No sweet music then. "For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song." Many a poor child of God is carried away captive into the free-will camp, where their fleshly enemies demand a song of rejoicing when the heart is sad and sorrowful because of felt distance from home. "And they

that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" or, "*in the land of a stranger.*" There is no singing songs of deliverance, joy, or peace while we are in the land of far distances from a precious Christ whom our souls truly love.

We will look through God's blessed Word at some of the songs therein recorded, and see if our hearts are in harmony with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Leader of the praises of His people; for only those who are led by the power of the Holy Ghost can enter fully into the declarations of Divine judgment upon the enemies of Christ's Church and people contained in the various songs. Turn to Exod. xv. Moses sang, "I will sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously." Moses took no credit to himself. "The horse and his rider hath He cast into the sea." "The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea; his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone." Listen! "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength into Thy holy habitation." Listen again! "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which Thy hands have established, The LORD shall reign for ever and ever." Here we find rejoicing over enemies defeated, and jubilation in contemplating the judgments of JEHOVAH upon the foes of His people. Come with me to Judges v. 31, and think of that denunciation of dear old Deborah, a mother in Israel, after her account of God's judgment upon Sisera, for it is not mine now to enumerate the many points in her song. "So let all Thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Look at the songs recorded in the book of Psalms. There you meet with rejoicing over vanquished foes, and songs of triumph over enemies destroyed. Come to the New Testament, and what find we? Listen to the sweet song of Mary as she experienced and enjoyed God's salvation in the person of the Son of her womb. Here she rejoices in the debasing of some and in the exaltation of others. "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Luke i. 52, 53). Mark well the song of Zacharias in the same chapter. He sings of redemption by the Lord God of Israel for all His people. See! "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear." Notice the song which ascended from worshipping and adoring hearts as recorded in Acts iv. 23—30: "And being let go, they went to their own company." I like that! I like my own company, and I dislike the company of

any Philistine or Amalekite when I would enjoy the company of my God. "And reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is." Read through the song and you will see God's sovereignty overruling man's sin against His Christ. Look at Rev. xix. 1—4. Here the veil which hides the heavenly country from our view is drawn aside, and the redeemed are seen round about the throne contemplating the wonders of redeeming love and reprobating judgment. As the smoke of eternal torment ascends before their wondering gaze, they cry, "Amen, Alleluia."

But our text reveals a song of salvation. Look at the Spirit's instruction as to the mode of this singing in Col. iii. 16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." This reminds me of that blessed account of spiritual singing in Solomon's Song ii. 8—13: "The voice of my beloved! behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, He standeth behind our wall, He looketh forth at the windows, showing Himself through the lattice. My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing is come." What singing? The singing of the Father, Saviour, and Spirit experienced in the heart of an eternally-loved one. "And the voice of the Turtle is heard in our land." Now, wrath and condemnation, distress and damnation, are gone, and nothing is seen or enjoyed but a precious Christ, with love beaming from His eyes, flowing from His heart, love bestowed from His once-pierced hand. Life, light, and liberty are enjoyed, and I find myself in possession of the land of Divine revelation, spiritual promise, and covenant relationship. This brings me to notice—

III.—THE LAND—"In the land of Judah." This is the land which belongs to the Jews! But who are the Jews? I cannot believe they are those whom JEHOVAH has given over to judicial blindness, and who, according to the vain notions of some, are to be brought back to inherit the land accursed by the power of the infidel. Ah, my dear friends, as we are lifted up to enjoy the sweet liberty of the Gospel, to experience oneness with God in the land of Gospel light and love, we glory in the fact that "he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). He is a Jew who has been brought through the day of the LORD, the day of Jacob's trouble, and who has experienced deliverance therefrom by the redeeming blood of our Lord. Such are taught to sing the song of salvation in the land of JEHOVAH'S preparing,

"an honest and good heart" (Luke viii. 15). "*In the land of Judah.*" The name Judah indicates *praise blended with prayer*. Where there is praise to God for blessings bestowed, there is sure to be prayer to Him for a succession of them, even grace upon grace, faith upon faith, and visitation after visitation of the Covenant Three, with power and great glory, to our hearts.

Come with me to Deut. xxxiii. 7: "Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people." Judah pleaded with his father Jacob to send Benjamin with his brethren into Egypt, saying, "I will be surety for him." Does not that lead you to Jesus? See how he pleaded with Joseph for Benjamin's deliverance: "Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren" (Gen. xlv. 33). This is Jesus foreshadowed. In Rev. v. 5 we see Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, breaking the seals of Divine mysteries, and revealing their contents to the wondering gaze of those who are Jews in deed and in truth. Now turn to Heb. vii. 14: "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda." He was born of a lowly maid in Judah's royal tribe. He could say to the Father, "I know that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi. 42); this is the voice of Judah. "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25); this is the voice of Judah. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John ii. 1); this is the voice of Judah. Look at the many prayers recorded in the Scriptures as flowing from the land of Judah! David (2 Sam. vii. 18—29); Solomon (2 Chron. i. 10); Asa (2 Chron. xiv. 11, 12); Hezekiah (Isa. xxxvii., xxxviii.). Read these and see if you can find any oneness of spirit with them. Wherever the children of God are found in union and communion with such as these, there they possess the spiritual land of Judah—a land of covenant favour (Psa. lxxxv. 1); a land of Divine revelation (Gen. xii. 1); a land which can never be alienated, sold, forfeited, or cut off (Lev. xxv. 23); a land abounding with spiritual fruits and covenant blessings (Lev. xxvi. 4); a land where God's salvation is nigh unto all the inhabitants thereof, and His glory in the midst of it (Psa. lxxxv. 9). In the sweet experience of this the child of grace can sing,—

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,  
And my Beloved is mine!  
He brings a poor vile sinner  
Into His house of wine:  
I stand upon His merit,  
I know no other stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth  
In Emmanuel's land."

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION REALITIES.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JANUARY 19TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."—Col. iii. 1—4.

THE design of the Holy Ghost, and the desire of the apostle Paul, in the Scripture before us, was to lead the mind of the Colossian Christians away from everything short of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Paul delighted in being the honoured instrument in the hand of God in drawing their minds away from earthly, fleshly, perishing things, and fixing their attention upon those spiritual and heavenly realities which are to be found nowhere but in the great and glorious Head of the Church. This was his object and aim in every sermon he preached, in every letter he wrote, but is not so apparent in some epistles as in others. In the epistle to the Ephesians this shines forth most gloriously. There was a reason for this, because throughout the whole of it he was describing a people in blessed association and identification with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the spiritual privileges and blessings they possess and enjoy in Him. As you read through the Ephesian epistle, you will not find an allusion to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But you will find something concerning His coming in almost every other portion of the New Testament. You who are spiritually one with Him will notice amid all the fleshly religion surrounding you, that the majority of professors speak not of a present Christ, a Christ in the midst of them. They enjoy not the glorious millennium of grace in union with Him, no true freedom from sin, no sweet deliverance from the fear of death, no immu-



nity from hell and the grave, and generally place an adjective before that word "*coming*," and call it, "*the second coming*." My dear friends, I want something more than that. I desire His third, forsooth, ay, I want His thousandth coming. I rest not satisfied without His continual coming. I love His appearing, for when He appears not, it is very dark and dreary, and spiritual deadness is irksome to my soul. I do love the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with the blessings of grace and the hope of glory to my heart. I love to experience His loving embrace, to know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that He is mine, and I am His, to throw back Satan's "*ifs*," "*buts*," and "*peradventures*" upon himself. I love to delight myself in the company of the God of my salvation, and to rest in the sweet assurance that I am a member of that family which is loved with an everlasting love, redeemed by precious blood, quickened and kept alive by the Holy Ghost, ennobled by grace union to the King of kings, and heirs of that glorious inheritance which can never be moved, even God Himself, without whom I can neither be gratified nor satisfied.

As we look through that blessed epistle to the Ephesians, we learn that those whom he addresses are in eternal union and spiritual communion with Christ, in whom before all worlds they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (chap. i. 3). In the heavenlies they are blessed with resurrection-power, and ascension-glory with Him according to chap. i. 20: "Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies." The place of blessing and glory is also one of fellowship, communion, refreshment, and rest. See chap. ii. 6: "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ." It is also the place of Divine communication to spiritual revelation, where JEHOVAH is pleased to make known His mind and will to His redeemed and to use them as dispensers of His truth to the angels who surround His throne. It is a marvellous mercy for us to know that God has made me a messenger of peace and consolation to His tried and tempted children; and more than this, for, as Augustus Toplady declared, when he stood preaching in his Church at Broad Hembury, when only very few poor sinners were met together to hear him, angels formed part of his congregation. It is a wonderful mystery of redeeming love that poor worms of the earth should be the instruments through whom God reveals His mind to angelic beings. You see this in chap. iii. 10: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." But with the enjoyment of all these privileges the child of God forgets not that he is still in the flesh, and surrounded by sin, suffering, temptation, and tribulation. Turn to chap. vi. 12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against prin-

cialities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against *wicked spirits in the heavenlies*." That is something more than visiting the dens of vice and striving to make the thief an honest man. The would-be philanthropist may succeed in making such religious, while his religion will make him two-fold more a child of hell than he was before. You may go to the beershop and the gin-palace and reclaim the drunkard, or the debauchee, and make of him a sober man, and what is styled, *an ornament of society*, yet he may go down to the depths of eternal despair with all his moral and religious ornamentation on his head. The living child of God is lifted above such flesh and blood wrestling, as saith the apostle: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood." We see sin in the root, while the moralist sees it only in the fruit. "Spirit, not letter, is my motto," said the valiant William Parks of Openshaw, to which my soul responds "Amen." When God blesses His message of love and mercy to the heart of a thief, that will make him honest. Grace alone can make a man sober in God's sight. Do we know anything of the transforming power of grace? Yes, blessed be God, we do; and we bless Him because the work is all His own.

When we come to consider this epistle to the Colossians, we see the apostle dealing out the same truths with something concerning the coming of the Lord. Why is this? Because Jesus was not quite the All in all of the Colossian Christians. The Ephesian Christians were wholly occupied with their great and glorious Head. The Colossians were engaged with the outside trappings of Christianity, the so-called means of grace, and the conveniences of public worship. Ah! say some of you, that is what you are doing. See how you have got into debt in repairing and improving the chapel! Are you not troubled? Not a bit of it, for the gold and the silver belong to Him, whom we worship here, and if He cannot provide us with £350, it is time to give up. That is the spot where my soul rests in peace and sweet composure this morning. The things that must perish with the using, but which are necessary, nevertheless, are at present no trouble to me, my God having made Himself so precious to me in His grace and beauty. As we proceed through the first chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, we meet with a characteristic word, and that word is "ALL." This is to express the glorious perfection of a gracious supply abounding by Jesus Christ to the whole election of grace. Whatever God does, He does perfectly. There is no half-doing with God. David could say: "The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me" (Psa. cxxxviii. 8). Solomon declared: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that man should fear before Him" (Eccles. iii. 14). Paul was confident that He who began His good work of grace in a

redeemed sinner's soul would finish it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. i. 6). Look at Col. i. 9: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in ALL wisdom and spiritual understanding." This was a prayer that they might not fall short of that perfect schooling which is in Christ Jesus. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto ALL pleasing." What pleasing is this? See! The Father is pleased, Jesus is pleased, and the Holy Ghost is pleased, ay, and elect sinners are pleased when they perceive the work of the Lord abounding in each other. "Strengthened with ALL might." This reminds me of an old friend asking me how I was this morning, when I replied, "I have to go into the pulpit." He responded, "When I am weak, then am I strong." This is the strength of the Lord, the power of Christ, the omnipotence of Deity. "Strengthened with all might, according to" my faith or diligence? Oh, no! It is "according to His glorious power." That is the might that suits me. "Unto ALL patience." Have you got it? If I am in union with Him I have it, yet it is not mine; but His. It is His own work, His own grace. "And long-suffering with joyfulness." This is the joy of JEHOVAH (Neh. viii. 10) and the strength of His people. See how the word ALL is repeated in the 16th, 17th, and 18th verses, and in the 19th we have this precious declaration: "For it pleased the Father that in Him should ALL fulness dwell." Not some, but ALL fulness. "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). Grace received is the pledge and earnest of future and more copious supplies.

As we meditate upon chap. ii., we find the apostle expressing his fear and care for the Colossian Christians. You do not find this in his epistle to the Ephesian saints. The Ephesians were all right, being wholly occupied with their Head and Lord. The Colossians were taken up with the outside trappings, while they lost sight of *resurrection and ascension realities*. They were like a lot of religious children delighting themselves with playthings. I have found it true in my experience and observation that a child of God who delights in his playthings will not look very much like a child if you interfere with them. But the apostle, in his conflict, fear, and care for his brethren, prays "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love." You may rest assured of this, there can be no knitting together, either naturally or spiritually, without pain, yet there is true pleasure in the pain when the knitting is by Divine power and love. "And unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Here you see the Divine Three-in-One set forth, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Hid! Who to? Not to the Ephesians, for they were revealed to them; but to the Colossians they were

hid. Behind what? Behind their ceremonies, ordinances, rites, rules, and laws. Wherever you find such things as these abounding, you will be sure to detect the fact that the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden from view. The apostle continues: "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." Nevertheless, throughout the succeeding portion of this chapter he warns them against their tendencies, and points them to the perfection they had in the doing and dying of Christ. Look at verse 9: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power." They were incomplete in respect to those outward things which engrossed so much of their attention. Come to verse 16: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." Blessed be God, we have a perpetual Sabbath in the person and work of Christ. See how Paul states this in Heb. iv. 9: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." While every other rest is disturbed this rest in Christ remaineth ever the same. "For we which have believed do enter into rest." It does not say *we have entered into rest*, though that is a blessed fact; but, *we do enter into rest*, or into a keeping of the Sabbath. What is this Sabbath? "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). When is this Sabbath? On Sunday? Yes, and on any day of the week He is pleased to reveal Himself to us. When He speaks home this precious command to our hearts, we do enter into God's rest, God's Sabbath, and we cease from our own works as He did from His. As we enjoy liberty and rest in Christ, the Holy Ghost by the apostle says to us, "Let no man judge you in those things which are a shadow of things to come, *for* the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Here you notice the difference between this epistle and that to the Ephesians. The epistle to the Ephesians reveals Christ, the Head, holding the members, the epistle to the Colossians describes the members holding to the Head. Each position is one of blessed privilege. It is a mercy for me to hang upon Christ for life and salvation

"When sins and fears prevailing rise,  
And fainting hope almost expires;"

but it is a sweeter mercy for me to experience the embracings

of the arms of everlasting love. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" This is as much as to say, Why are you bothering yourselves with these fleshly, fleeting, and perishing things ("which all are to perish with the using") after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh."

Now then, Where do you live? Where is your home? Where is your place of worship? Our home is where our heart is. Our place of worship is where Christ is pleased to reveal Himself. A few of us found this to be the case a few weeks ago at Dulwich House, when we had our friend and brother Rolleston with us. The Lord gave us a precious dish from 1 John i. 3: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." I should be the most miserable wretch in creation if I must stand here to declare to you that which I have not seen, felt, and handled for myself. Why do I declare that which God has made experimentally mine? Because you are here to listen to me? No! But because there are those here who have come longing, desiring, and sighing for the presence of the Master, to sit at His table and partake of His bounty; and it is the desire of my heart that such may have fellowship with me in the things of God. Notice what John says: "That ye also may have fellowship with us." It is my blessed privilege to stand here, as a priest of God's own appointing and sending, in the midst of His worshipping priests—for all His living elect are priests in union with the Lamb—feeding in spiritual fellowship upon the breast of everlasting affection and the shoulder of irresistible power. It is a marvellous mercy to know and feel that

"His love is as great as His power,  
And neither knows measure nor end."

To know that we are feasting upon the slain Lamb causes the heart to quiver with gratitude and delight before Him. Then we can say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father." The Father feasts with delight upon that which alone can satisfy the hungering souls of His children. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," within the walls of Grove chapel, in some highly-favoured parish church, in the retirement of our chambers, or, as we are walking by the way. In whatever place of God's appointing He blesses His twos and threes with the communication of what He has done for them in the Son of His love, that is a place of worship to them. Where do you live? "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20). Where do you worship? "Yet will I be to them a little Sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" (Ezek. xi. 16). What a blessed truth! In every spot of difficulty, doubt,

and danger, temptation, trial, and tribulation He has promised to be with His people. When our poor hearts have felt cold and dead, and we have been burdened with the spirit of accursed indifference, even then He has been carrying on His own gracious work in us, and bringing us to that spot of favour and blessedness where He would reveal to us the precious fact that our salvation, regeneration, preservation, and glorification are all in His own gracious hands.

We will now glance at the portion I have read as my text. It forms a rich cluster of experimental truths, and if they be opened up to our hearts by the power of God the Holy Ghost, we shall have a blessed time together. We see the Church in Christ *dead* to the law, to sin, to the world, and to the flesh. We also see it one with Him in *resurrection-power and ascension-glory*. We behold with wonder the dignity thrust upon it as seated with Him in the glory of God the Father at His right hand. We see also with joy the effect of all this, the affection of the child of God set upon things above in loving communion with a risen and a reigning Christ. Mark! "*Ye are dead.*" As we are blessed with a spiritual acquaintance with the New Testament Scriptures we see and understand something of that very blessed and glorious truth—*union to our Lord Jesus Christ*. Oneness with Christ is the glory of God's Gospel. As the body is united to the head, so all the spiritual members of the Lord Jesus Christ are united to Him, their great and glorious Head. From Him all motive, power, and influence flows to them. The union of Christ to the Church and the Church to Christ flows from the eternal and irrevocable purpose of JEHOVAH. You will see this in Rom. viii. 29: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son." Did you notice that I left out those two words "to be?" They are in italics, and the verse will read very well without them, thus: "He also did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son." He could not predestinate them otherwise. He could not predestinate them to Himself as they stood in union with Adam the first, neither could He go out of Himself for a predestinating plan or design, therefore He conformed them to that which He found in Himself, "*the image of His Son.*" Old John Kent knew something of this when he sang so sweetly,—

"Then, in the glass of His decrees  
Christ and His bride appeared as one;  
Her sin, by imputation, His,  
While she in spotless splendour shone."

"Conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn, or chief, among many brethren." When the word "*Firstborn*" appears in many portions of God's Word referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, it sets Him forth as the Chief or First Elect of His elect brethren. "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also

justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Now let us notice this glorious truth of union with Christ as set before us experimentally in the epistles, and according to the mind of the Holy Ghost. If I am conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ in living oneness, if I am made spiritually one with Him according to 1 Cor. vi. 17: "He that is joined to the Lord is spiritually one with Him," I shall be led to glorify God in my spirit, soul, and body, which are His, and that oftentimes in the furnace and in the flood. In spots of suffering and temptation I shall be like Him. As He was "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," so shall I have spiritual sorrow and acquaintance with grief. As those words of the hymn writer are blessedly true,—

"A Mourner all His life was He,  
A dying Lamb at last,"—

so throughout our earthly pilgrimage we shall find association and identification with Him in His mourning and dying. You find this truth stated in Rom. viii. 17: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; *if so be that we suffer with Him*, that we may be also glorified together." You find it also in 2 Tim. ii. 10—12: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with *Him*, we shall also live with *Him*; if we suffer, we shall also reign with *Him*." If we bear His cross, we shall wear His crown. We must have the conflict before the victory—the toil before the rest—the trial before the triumph—the experience of perplexity before the enjoyment of sweet peace in Him. Yes, in the world we shall have tribulation; but in Him we must enjoy the peace of God, the quietness of God, the tranquillity of God, which passeth all understanding. This is the quietness of God which He maintains over all the confusion, disorder, and strife abounding in the world, which He causes to work together for good to all those who love Him, being the called according to His purpose.

Now look at another portion which you will find in 2 Cor. i. 5: "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." We may talk about the sufferings of Christ abounding in Gethsemane and on Calvary; but as we talk of them, do our hearts meet in the furnace of affliction and find sweet oneness with Him therein? Mine does sometimes. Look now at that blessed portion in Col. i. 24—a Scripture so little understood, yet used by Popish and Jesuitical controversialists to suit their own purpose, and make it say anything and everything but what it means: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you." I feel convinced that there is not an ache of my body but what God has designed for the spiritual benefit of some poor tried member of His Church—there is not

a trial, trouble, or temptation but He has sent it for the good of some poor child in His family—there has not been a deep hole into which I have been plunged but He has overruled it for the comfort and consolation of some poor battered and shattered ones who are near and dear to Him. But the apostle says, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." As long as a God-sent minister is in the body, he must know something of a continual crucifixion of the flesh and mortification of his members for the mutual comfort and consolation of the suffering members of the one body. This is a marvellous and mysterious truth unknown to worldlings, hypocrites, and proud professors. These are the afflictions of Christ mystical, the sympathy of suffering existing between Christ the Head and all His living members. He experienced them in all their fulness while we have them dealt out in measure to us.

The first point we notice is DEATH. "Ye are dead." What are we to understand by that? A living child of God knows something of spiritual death by Divine power. In Romans vii. the apostle shows from his own case the killing work of the law in the hearts of elect vessels of mercy. He says, "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Mark you, I know what that means; but it was not through hearing the commandments read in church, or by my reading them. It was not because they were written by the finger of God upon tables of stone. It was not because the Spirit of God caused them to be written in Exod. xx., and again in Deut. v., but it was because the commandment came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost revealing to me the true nature of sin. Sin then became exceeding sinful to me. Where previously I saw virtue, I then beheld vice. "Sin revived and I died." Yes, I died to all creature wisdom, creature ability, creature righteousness, and creature purity. Brought under the power of this killing process I am unable to do anything in the matter of my salvation and acceptance with God. What can a dead man do? You may do what you like with him, but you cannot produce life, or preserve beauty or comeliness. Bring the rays of the sun to bear upon his mortal remains, and putrefaction becomes still more putrid. That which is loathsome must be buried and hidden from sight. However much our natural affections may hover over that which was loved and prized, when death seizes it, we say with Abraham, "Bury my dead out of my sight." As God the ever-blessed Spirit works in you and in me, we see ourselves to be but one mass of sin and death before God, and we should just as soon expect to find holiness in hell as to find purity in the old Adam nature. Yes, you may as soon expect to hear of pleasure in the realms of never-ending despair as to find wisdom, righteousness, or faith in spiritual mysteries in the natural man.



"Ye are dead" through and to the law, and to sin. Through the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have become dead to sin, which was made life to us by the power of the law. How is this, say you? Because He who is our Surety, our Mediator, and our Redeemer from the curse of the law, took the whole load of our transgressions, sins, and iniquities, and bore them in His own body to the tree, carried them into the land of never-ending forgetfulness, threw them into the depths of the sea of eternal oblivion, cast them all behind God's back, and, as we look into our Father's face, we find immensity, eternity, and infinity between us and them. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He made an end of sin, so that now it has no damning power over the child of God. Sin has no penal power over me as I stand in Christ. Neither Satan nor law can now exact anything from me, for my sins appear not in the presence of my God, but the righteousness of my Lord and God is on me in their place. See! "Dead to the law by the body of Christ." As human laws wreak all their vengeance and spend all their power upon the culprit who suffers the last dread penalty, and can exact no more; so the spiritual, perfect, and fiery law of God exhausted all its wrath and power upon Jesus, the Surety of His people, by which they are everlastingly free from all its claims.

"No claims can law or justice have  
On Jesus' honoured bride;  
Full payment to the law He gave  
When for her sins He died."

Oh, it is a glorious privilege for me to know that when the law inflicted all its sentence of condemnation and death upon Jesus, it finished all its course with me. I was dealt with in Him, and by His sufferings and death I am delivered from all its demands. In the person of Zion's adorable Surety, all in union with Him find all the law's exactions, frankly met and fully answered. "*Dead to the world.*" It is marvellous how the world fastens upon and clings to us, ay, and our natural affections cling to it. We often seem earth-bound in our affections. I do, and nothing but a knowledge and felt experience of my oneness with my once crucified Lord gives me a gracious lift out of my worldliness and sensuality.

"I thirst, but not as once I did,  
The vain delights of earth to share;  
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid  
That I should seek my pleasures there.  
It was the sight of Thy dear cross  
First weaned my soul from earthly things;  
And taught me to esteem as dross  
The mirth of fools, and pomp of kings."

See Gal. vi. 14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." As the world receded

from before the failing vision of the poor wretch who experienced the death-throes of crucifixion, so the delights, enjoyments, and pleasures of this world fade away from the spiritual vision of that highly-favoured, yet exercised sinner who can say by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. i. 20).

This brings us to notice our oneness with Christ in resurrection. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." When Christ died, all the elect died in Him; when He was buried, all His members in a mystic or spiritual manner were buried with Him; when He rose again, every one of them rose with Him in the purpose and good pleasure of the Father. See how blessedly Paul keeps this before the mind of the Ephesian Christians. In chap. i. 19, 20, he prays that they might know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places." Again in chap. ii. 4—6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This was not a mere opinion or matter of doctrine with the apostle. He prayed, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Phil. iii. 10). As His resurrection-power is communicated to us, we long for further manifestations of the love and beauty of Jesus, that we may rise to something higher than prayer meetings, religious services, or even communion with the brethren. Yes, we long for a clean lift in union with Him out of sin and self. Our souls cleave to the dust, but our cry ascends to Him who alone can answer, "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word." Ofttimes we find ourselves in the grave of carnality and bound around with fleshly graveclothes, yet, blessed be His holy name, we know something of the sweetness and power of that voice of which John writes, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (chap. v. 25). This leads the mind to the contemplation and enjoyment of His ascension-glories. "He ascended into heaven" is an article of our creed and of our confidence. He is gone there to appear in the presence of God for us, and to draw our hearts with loving desire after Him. When He ascended to His Father and ours, the disciples who witnessed His flight "looked steadfastly toward heaven." They were asked the question, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" They might have answered, "Because the one Object of our heart's affection is there." Why are we ofttimes looking up and longing for home? Because of the gracious promise He left to

us, "I go to prepare," or possess, "a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3). There we have the blessed assurance that at this moment a living and loving Christ stands before the throne in our nature, possessing the kingdom for us. God, in our nature, in our Father's house, holds in undisturbed security the everlasting and inalienable inheritance which the Father has made over to us in Him. Do we believe it? As assuredly as the great King-Priest has power over all things in heaven and in earth, so will He draw our affections and fix them upon things above. His covenant command will come home with almighty power, "If ye then be risen with Christ," from sin, from the law, from the world, from death, and from self, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Here we see His session. Having finished the work of His Father's glorification and His people's salvation, He stands before the Father with acceptance, and all His people accepted in Him. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." However good, precious, or lovely earthly possessions may be, death, disappointment, and dissatisfaction is stamped upon them all.

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away,  
Change and decay in all around I see;  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me."

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." The apostle as much as says, Life and immortality is brought to light to my heart, but He is hidden from you. When He appears by the power of the Holy Ghost to your waiting souls, then shall ye also appear with Him and as He is. Then ye shall appear in the glory of His person, in the glory of His salvation, in the glory of His righteousness, and in the glory of His kingdom. Then you shall truly understand the mystery of redeeming love, and experience the indescribable sympathies which flow from His loving heart to His suffering members here below. This appearing in grace is the pledge, the earnest, and the sweet foretaste of our appearing with Him in that eternal glory which He has in store, and holds in undisturbed security, for all those in eternal and hallowed association with Himself.

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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“HE IS ABLE.”

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JANUARY 26TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“Believe ye that I am able to do this?”—Matt. ix. 28.

**G**OD has a bit of good news for some of you this morning. It is this:—He never yet damned a child of His for doubting, and never will. But there is a piece of awful news to all those out of the Son of His love, who can parade a false profession, which is this: He will damn such for their believing. He cannot discard or put away one of those upon whom His everlasting and immutable love is fixed. He cannot unredeem one of those for whom the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was shed. He cannot banish one of those who by His blessed Spirit have been brought into His family as the fruit of the Redeemer's sufferings. In all these blessed, gracious, and highly-favoured persons Jesus sees the fruit of the travail of His soul, and with them He is perfectly and unceasingly satisfied. In all of them the Father sees His own workmanship, the production of His covenant love, and thus beholding them, He cannot but keep near to Himself objects so dear and precious. They are so precious to Him that He seems by His apostles and prophets to ransack creation to find out names and appellations whereby He may describe His love and His fondness for them, and His delight in them. He calls His bride, Hephzibah, “My delight is in her” (Isa. lxii. 4). He calls His gathered ones, “My jewels—*My special treasure*” (Mal. iii. 17). He calls those whom He has drawn into blessed association with Himself, “His lilies” (Song ii. 16). He describes the soul that mourns over its iniquities, yet flies long distances for pure food and covenant provision, as “My dove” (Song ii. 14; Isa. lx. 8). He styles those who sigh and cry because of their impurity, and who can see in themselves everything but purity, “My undefiled” (Song v. 2). Mark you! They are

always so in His estimation. There is no change in Him—no change in His purpose—no change in His love. We see this in those glorious declarations of His immutability, which found a place in my memory long years ago, and caused my young heart to thrill with awe and reverence at the thought of His sacred majesty: “God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?” (Num. xxiii. 19). Again, “And also the Strength”—or, as you read in the margin, “Eternity, or Victory”—“of Israel will not lie nor repent; for He is not a man that He should repent” (1 Sam. xv. 29). From the exercised heart of poor Job this declaration flows, “But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth even that He doeth” (Job xxiii. 13). The burden of the Word of the LORD by Malachi contains this precious announcement for the comfort and consolation of the godly remnant who sighed and sorrowed in the midst of godless profession: “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. iii. 6). Concerning His gracious bounties and blessings to His people, Paul says, “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom. xi. 29). Practical James preaches glorious sovereignty in the words, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James i. 17). Ah! my dear friends, we need not wonder at Hammond singing so sweetly, and bequeathing his words of praise to the Church throughout all future ages to sing,

“Unchangeable His will,  
Whatever be my frame;  
His loving heart is still  
Eternally the same:  
My soul through many changes goes,  
His love no variation knows.”

I change, He changes not. In respect to every gift of His providence I am changeable, and feelingly in regard to every revelation of His grace I am mutable. But it is our mercy to know that whatever be our weak conceptions of His grace, or our lack of the enjoyment of His love, He is ever the same.

He bestows on us His own precious faith. His own! I love that. He does not bestow power and ability by which I can believe for myself; but He communicates to me His own faith. Do we trust? It is in a trusting God. He had faith in His Son from covenant transactions to salvation realities upon Calvary's tree, and in the experiences of His own elect. Christ, as the Mediator of the covenant, trusted in the Father for the fulfilment of every promise He had made to Him for His people. The Father first trusted in Christ (Eph. i. 12), and Christ trusted in Him (Heb. ii. 13), and now we in spiritual succession trust in

the Father and in the Son, and yet the faith is His own. Our realization of the possession of His faith is sometimes very weak, and at other times we come to the conclusion that we have no faith at all. We read His written Word, and we know it is true, and no man can persuade us to the contrary. I enjoy this glorious vantage ground of God's own giving, and thank Him for it, but I want something more. His Word is all true; but is it true for me? That is the question. It reveals salvation perfect and complete, salvation grand and glorious, salvation wholly in God's hands from first to last, salvation in His purpose and in His power, all for a people eternally loved by Him in Christ Jesus. Is this salvation mine? This question pursues me wherever I go, and sometimes I am blessed with the gracious communication to my heart, "I am thy salvation." But see! As assuredly as He has begun His own good work in me, He will perfect it, however weak my conception of that work, or however faint my apprehension of it may be. My faith may be so weak that I am only able to touch the hem of the garment of my Lord, or I may be able to muster sufficient courage to allow me to hope to be carried to Him, yet the faith of His own giving must eventually "laugh at impossibilities, and say, It shall be done." Yet it is no more I that say it, but the Spirit of Christ that dwelleth in me.

Because of the enjoyment of this, my mind has been led by the blessed Comforter, the covenant Remembrancer, the gracious Guide and Teacher of the Church, into some precious contemplations of the faith of His own giving, as revealed in this chapter. At the commencement we find an account of one sick of the palsy being brought to Jesus. Mark you! It does not say he came to Jesus, yet he came; but it was not in his own strength, or upon his own legs. His coming was because he was brought. He came, but he was carried. Where was his faith? There is no mention of it. He had none; none whatever. Read verse 2, one of the most glorious verses in the whole compass of God's blessed Word. "And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: *and Jesus seeing their faith.*" Whose faith? Not the faith of the man; but that of the very persons who carried him. It may be there are some carriers in this congregation, some whose hearts now thrill with spiritual longing for those near and dear to you who are at a distance from Him. You are carrying such loved ones in your desires and longings to the footstool of sovereign mercy, to the arms of a precious Christ, to Gilead the mount of covenant testimony where the good Physician is found whose balmy blood heals every wound which sin and Satan have made. Many a doubting and fearing one is carried this morning to the feet of Jesus, it may be in the arms of very weak faith, but it is the faith of His own giving which leads from *self* to *HIMSELF*. As we carry wife, husband, child, or children, *ay, the*

whole lot of them to Him, we beg Him of His own sovereign mercy to give to each and all, the blessed experience of that life and love He has so graciously bestowed upon us, but of which we feel so little, and which causes us to mourn and weep our lack of. It is a blessed thing to see this poor man carried by the faith of others, and received and healed by a precious Christ. A little lower down in the chapter we see an account of a poor woman diseased with an issue of blood twelve years. She came behind our Lord and touched the hem of His garment, saying within herself, "If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole." Are there any touchers here this morning? Those who desire only to touch the hem of His garment, and who have such a sense and realisation of their own corruption and depravity, that they almost imagine if they touched that gracious and adorable One who is impeccable, they would defile Him. Yet with the fear there is a determination, and that wrought in them by His own blessed Spirit, to come to Him by the constraint of His own love, or be for ever lost. There is a venturing because the case is so desperate like that recorded in Esther iv. 16:—"So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." The poor diseased woman did all her talking within herself: "She said within herself." You see from this she was no Mrs. Talkative. She was one of those whom Hart had in his mind when he wrote these lines,—

"No big words of ready talkers.  
No dry doctrine will suffice;  
Broken hearts and humble walkers,  
These are dear in Jesus' eyes."

With her there was no rant, no vociferation, no demonstration; but quietly and without a sound she came behind and touched the hem of His garment, saying within herself, "If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole." There was sterling faith and sweet humility. He turned Him about. He could not do any other. There was a spiritual and a Divine necessity for His turning about. See! As the needle is attracted to the pole, so all elect vessels of mercy are attracted and drawn to Him to whom the gathering of the people shall be; and He is graciously attracted to them, and cannot be kept away from them. The woman talking within herself directs the mind to the hidden workings of the Divine nature within. The inward talk and the outward touch were the evidences of the possession of the faith of God. "But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."

The Lord Jesus Christ departed thence, when two blind men followed Him, crying and saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." These two men had discovered the kingly

character of our Lord and Master, who was despised and rejected of men, who came to His own and His own received Him not. In the Man who was accounted as base and vile by the religious ones of His day, the two blind men saw the rightful King of Israel. "And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him : and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this?" The whole of this chapter is an exposition or exhibition of the faith of God's own giving, and which He works in the hearts of His people by the power of the Holy Ghost. It gives a lasting rebuke to the free-will-evangelicals of the present day, who have the name of Protestant ever at the end of their tongues while their Protestantism is characterised by the veriest Popery, hounding on many a poor and tried one to believe who feels and bewails his utter inability to believe, trust, or confide in God. Free-willers make faith to be the pre-requisite for every mercy received, while here we see the Lord Jesus Christ heals one who manifested no faith at all, He cured another who came to Him without ostentation, observation, or outward show. Here we have two blind men who own Him as the King of Israel and acknowledge His glorious sovereignty. They lacked their sight, yet looked to Him as the Opener of the eyes of the blind. "Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord." This was the expression of the faith of His own giving. Faith in every phase and feature is found in God's blessed Word, and in every case it is that which our Lord describes as "The faith of God" (Mark xi. 22, margin). This is the faith communicated from the great and glorious Head to the various members of His mystical body.

It is ours this morning to look at that little word with a big meaning, "ABLE." It is a most precious word in its spiritual connections. "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" To do what? In the case before us, to give the two blind men their sight. They answered Him in the affirmative. Whatever be our darkness of mind, want of spiritual sight, or lack of discernment in Divine things, He alone is able to bless us with spiritual illumination. But it is not my intention to dwell upon the narrative. By the grace and guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit we will seek a little instruction from this word "*able*" as it appears in the New Testament Scriptures. Do you hear the voice of the Beloved in this gracious question to your souls, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" What do you want doing for you this morning? I tell you honestly and candidly that I want everything of a spiritual and heavenly nature done for me. Perfect helplessness, incompetency, and inability are mine, and have characterised every step of my spiritual history. I do not say, "*my religious history*," for that word religion always wants a word of qualification to explain it. I think there is only one place in God's written Word where it refers to



that which comes down from above as the gift of the Father of lights. See James i. 27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

It was my lot and privilege yesterday afternoon to visit one, who, I believe, is a poor weakling of His, and perhaps I shall never see him again upon earth. I hesitated not to go, but in going I hesitated much. What shall I say to the poor man? Something internal whispered, Leave that to the Master. I left it with Him. As I sat by the bed of the sufferer and witnessed his gasping for breath, God's own precious word of truth came home to my heart in that one word "ABLE" as it is revealed throughout the New Testament. "Believe ye that I am ABLE to do this?" Now what do we want doing? Well, there is scarcely one in this place but who wants saving, wants pardoning, wants justifying, wants quickening, wants refreshing, wants encouraging, and wants comforting. To such the Master seems to cry from the very heights of covenant favour, and from the deep that coucheth beneath the letter of His word, "Believe ye that I am ABLE to do this?" To His doubting, fearing, hesitating children He turns round and by the convicting power of His blessed Spirit deals with them as He dealt with Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. To Abraham He said, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Gen. xviii. 14). To Moses He puts the searching question, "Is the LORD'S hand waxed short?" (Num. xi. 23). The doubting children in Isaiah's days were roused up to the contemplation of their covenant privileges with the words, "Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?" (Isaiah l. 2). Again they are reminded of His immutable power, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save" (Isa. lix. 1). The Word of the LORD counselled and comforted the weeping prophet with this assuring question, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jer. xxxii. 27). Well may He ask the question of each and every poor, tried, and exercised sinner here this morning, "'Is My arm shortened that it cannot save' thee from those wretched sins which distress thee, from those corruptions which seethe and surge within thee, from that accursed unbelief which drags thee down to earth, and sin, and death?" As I am thus reminded of my inability, blessed be God, while it is experienced it is but as the forerunner of His gracious ability which He reveals in His written Word and by His Spirit in the hearts of His people according to His covenant promise, "On Mine arm shall they trust" (Isa. li. 5). On the arm of her covenant-keeping JEHOVAH the virgin of Israel shall trust—that is, she shall lean upon His power. See how this is described in Song viii. 5: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" This is the Church, the bride of the Lamb, in conscious weakness, experiencing her

own inability, and feeling something of that sustaining power set forth in the precious metaphor, "The Arm of the LORD." In Isa. liii. 1 the prophet asks in surprise, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" To whom is God's Christ revealed? By whom is God's Gospel believed? This we see from Rom. i. 16: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." That God's Christ is God's power you will find in 1 Cor. i. 24: "Christ the power of God." See! If I am leaning upon the Christ of God, I am sustained by the arm of God, and thus sustained, though manifesting my own weakness in the act of leaning, I am enabled by the grace He bestows upon me, and the confidence with which He inspires me, to say,

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,  
And my Beloved is mine!  
He brings a poor vile sinner  
Into His 'house of wine.'  
I stand upon His merit,  
I know no other stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,  
In Emmanuel's land."

Let us now look through the New Testament Scriptures in search of this precious word "ABLE." Some of you may be saying this morning, I wish I was able to pray as I ought. I wish I was able to walk in the ways of the Lord as I ought. I wish I was able to come to God as I ought. My dear friends, your complaining thus is a good sign. The consciousness of your inability is almost a sure sign of His ability to do for you those things you cannot do for yourselves. Turn with me to Heb. vii. 25. There we find a very blessed testimony concerning God's arm, God's power, God's Christ as

"ABLE TO SAVE."

"Wherefore"—that is, because of the intransmissible priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, His priesthood can never be transferred from Himself to any other on account of any office or order they may fill. So, every one that styles himself a priest, whether it be in Rome's confederacy against God and man, or in the Establishment of this country, is a rank impostor. It matters not whether he be at St. Peter's, Rome, St. Paul's, London, or at St. Giles', Camberwell. There are no priests in this dispensation of grace, but those in vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. All such are worshipping priests in the spiritual temple of JEHOVAH, feeding upon the breast of His everlasting love, and the shoulder of His irresistible power. "Wherefore He is ABLE TO SAVE them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." To the uttermost of what? To the uttermost length of sin that an elect vessel of mercy like Manasseh may run. To the uttermost bounds of declension and folly that any of God's

Ephraims may wander. To the uttermost degree of doubt, unbelief, or infidelity to which a matter-of-fact Thomas may fall. To the uttermost of Satan's direst temptations and fiercest assaults encompassing the spiritual life of many a poor wavering Peter. To the uttermost depths of dark despondency and black despair which tell their terrible tales in the heart of many a poor child of God so near and dear to Him. "He is ABLE TO SAVE to the uttermost" all such as these. Why is He able? Because in covenant the Father laid help upon Him the mighty One (Psalm lxxxix. 19). Because His might was seen in the accomplishment of His people's salvation (Isaiah lxiii. 1). On the ground of His accomplished redemption, perfected salvation, spotless obedience, triumph over death, hell, and sin, and His possessing the place prepared before all worlds for the whole election of grace, He is ABLE TO SAVE. But the apostle gives another reason for this ability, which is this: "Seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Last night my eye wandered with delight over these precious words of Toplady's:—

"Awake, sweet gratitude, and sing  
The ascended Saviour's love;  
Sing how He lives to carry on  
His people's cause above.

With cries and tears He offer'd up  
His humble suit below;  
But with authority He asks,  
Enthroned in glory now.

For all that come to God by Him,  
Salvation He demands;  
Points to their names upon His breast,  
And spreads His wounded hands.

Eternal life at His request,  
To every saint is given;  
Safety on earth, and, after death,  
The plenitude of heaven."

As the Father looks and beholds the evidences of Christ's cross and passion, and brings the hearts of His people into perfect acquiescence with Him, there neither sin, Satan, corruption, nor all the evil influences of this wretched world, however much they torment a poor child of God, can ever hinder Him in the accomplishment of His purpose of love. It shall be done. Come with me to Heb. ii. 18. Here you have a blessed declaration of Christ's solace, Christ's sympathy. He is

"ABLE TO SUCCOUR."

"For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is ABLE TO SUCCOUR them that are tempted." Have we any tempted and tried ones to-day? There is a little bit of comfort for you. Because He was tempted in all points like as we are, He is able to succour (Heb. iv. 14). Look at this cause of His ability to succour! He has been in the very spots of trial; He has experienced the same temptations through which we are

called to pass during our earthly pilgrimage. Read over the first part of Matt. iv. Here we see the Lord Jesus Christ tempted to distrust, destruction, and despair. I know there are some here who have been subjected to the very same temptations. "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is a marvellous mercy for us to know that He is thus ABLE to come down to our spots of suffering, sorrow, disappointment, and distress with His own sweet succour and sympathy, the experience of which causes my heart to sing,—

"As Man, a Man of sorrows, Thou  
Hast suffered every human woe,  
And thus enthroned in glory now,  
Canst pity all Thy saints below.

Sweet thought ! my Saviour, but for this  
I could not tell my grief to Thee :  
Nor hope that Thou, midst all Thy bliss  
And glory, Lord ! couldst feel for me."

In the face of truths so precious, the question may well be put to such an unbelieving heart as mine: "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" But my adoring heart eagerly responds, "Lord, Thou art not only able, but willing." His willingness is manifested in the thrill of deep delight and gratitude experienced in singing such a precious verse as this:—

"Past suffering now, the tender heart  
Of Jesus on His Father's throne  
In all our sorrows bears a part,  
And feels them as He felt His own."

"In every pang that rends the heart,  
The 'Man of sorrows' bears a part ;  
He sympathises with our grief,  
And brings the suffering saint relief."

He is ABLE to save, succour, and sympathise. Now turn to 2 Timothy i. 12, where you will see Christ

"ABLE TO KEEP."

"I know whom I have believed." It is not, "I know in whom I have believed," but "I know whom I have believed." I know HIM, "and am persuaded that He is ABLE TO KEEP that which I have committed unto Him against that day." I will tell you what I have deposited with Him, not by an act of my own natural free-will or fleshly faith, but by the working of His own Spirit in my daily experience teaching me my utter inability, and the perishing state of all earthly things, however lawful or gratifying they may be. He has graciously taught me to commit my body, my soul, my concerns, my circumstances, and my whole salvation into the hands of a loving Redeemer. I can say,—

"My times are in Thy hands,"

and sometimes I sigh,—

"My God, I wish them there,"

The apostle says, "He is ABLE TO KEEP that which I have committed unto Him against that day." He will keep my faith from failing, my hope from perishing, my love from decaying, my life from destruction, my feet from falling, and my soul from hell, and all this unto the great and glorious day when in undisturbed security He will present me perfect and complete in His eternal kingdom and glory. But very often, after I have committed all my concerns into His gracious hands, I experience weariness, want, and necessity; I lack the sensible enjoyment of the rich supplies of His heavenly grace. Well, even here He won't be wanting. Come with me to 2 Cor. ix. 8, where Paul declares that God is

"ABLE TO MAKE all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Am I in the experience of want, and do doubts and fears prevail thereby? He is able, as the God of all grace, and the Lord-Proprietor of all things, to chase them all away by the supply of all my need "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19). Do any of you doubt His covenant love and faithful care? He is able to bring you into the rich enjoyment of His abounding grace by Christ Jesus, give you the experience of that fulness of blessing found in Him alone, and safely conduct you through every toil, trial, temptation, and tribulation to that glory-home which He has prepared and reserved for you. "He is able to make all grace abound toward you," means that He will do it. He deals not out His bounties with stint or niggardliness. Oh, no! Glorious liberality characterises our God. He gives, and grows no poorer by giving. Have we life? He will give it to us more abundantly (John x. 10). Have we grace? "He giveth more grace" (James iv. 6). "If any of you, brethren, who fall into divers temptations, lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *elect men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James i. 5). But see! God's children, with all this grace given unto them, are sometimes cast down, and experience spiritual ruin and desolation. Blessed be God, He is "ABLE TO BUILD *them up*."

You see this hinted at in that glorious chapter, Jeremiah xxxi. 4: "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel." You may depend upon it, if you and I have anything to do with Israel's covenant God, we shall experience many a battering and shattering from the devil and the flesh, and shall many times feel cast down, broken down, and in ruins. Yet His promise holds good: "I will build thee." How will He build? Turn to Acts xx. 32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." The Word of His grace is the living Word for me in heaven to the Father, and the living Word by the

power of the Holy Ghost from the Father to me. He is able to build me up though I am in ruins, cast down, and, to the natural judgment, destroyed. We know something of that experience set before us in 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9 : "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; we are perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed." Cast down, yet upheld by a sovereign, omnipotent hand. Broken down, yet built up by covenant power. "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22). We shall oftentimes experience much brokenness of spirit because of our felt lack of faith, hope, love, and prayer ; but even here He will prove to us how He is

"ABLE TO DO"

all these *for us* by His Son and *in us* by His Spirit. This is what we want. We want that of which Hart sang so sweetly :—

"Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched.  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore !  
Jesus ready stands to save you,  
Full of pity, joined with power :  
HE IS ABLE :  
He is willing : doubt no more."

Come with me to that precious chapter, Eph. iii. 14—20. The apostle says : "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." There we have the apostle's prayer for the strengthening of the Ephesian Christians. Here we have his doxology : "Now unto Him that is ABLE TO DO exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." What power is that ? It is 'the power of prayer,' but not that rubbish you may see chalked upon the walls in the streets, and on the end of London-bridge. It is not the power of polluted breath flowing from the lips of unregenerate sinners and concealed professors. It is the power of God the ever-blessed Spirit in the hearts of elect and highly-favoured sinners. You see this in Eph. i. 19 : "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe according to the working of His mighty power." Again in Col. i. 29 : "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working which worketh (or energizeth) in me mightily." The prayers, sighs, groans, and desires of the saints are by the indwelling power of God. But we all know that we are hastening to that time when dissolution must take place, and separation from those we love must be experienced. The dark and untrodden path must be entered, and "this body of our humiliation" go down to the dust of death. In the contemplation of this, we rejoice to know that our Companion there will be that blessed One who "is

**"ABLE TO SUBDUE**

all things unto Himself." See Phil. iii. 20, 21 : "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby HE IS ABLE TO SUBDUE all things unto Himself." Sin subdued, fears subdued, death subdued, and Christ the Subduer the Strength of our heart and our Portion for ever. Once again, and I have done. After dissolution, there is presentation before His face in glory. Turn now to the short epistle of Jude, and mark well his doxology. It is a glorious one: "Now unto Him that is

**"ABLE TO KEEP YOU FROM FALLING."**

Are you fallen? He will provide carriers for you, and should these fail, He will Himself carry you. Do you mourn your unbelieving state? He will believe for you. Do you bewail your prayerless spirit? His intercession shall prevail for you. See! "HE IS ABLE to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." This is overflowing joy. The joy of the Lord is the strength of His people (Neh. viii. 10). This is the joy of the glorious Three-in-One. It is the harmonies of Deity conspiring to fill all heaven with strains of ineffable music. It is the overflowing of Divine delight to the whole of the glorified ones before the throne. "Your joy shall be full," said the Lord Jesus to His sorrowing disciples. Elect vessels filled with the fulness of their God. The overflowing of Divine joy shall fill the whole redeemed throng throughout a never-ending eternity. Presented faultless! Are you full of sin this morning? He sees not a sin in you. Are you sinning? You are free from all sin. Are you sensible of your depravity? He says, "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." Do you mourn over your unrighteousness? You are righteous in Him. Do you bewail your manifold transgressions? They are all swept away in the flood of the Redeemer's blood. Are you grieving over your shortcomings? You are complete in Him. Do you dread rejection from His presence? You are accepted and graced in the Beloved. In Him you are blessed by the Great Sacred Three, never to be separated from Him, but through the countless ages of eternity to bask in the sunshine of His presence and be lost in His love.

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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PREPARED THINGS FOR A PREPARED PEOPLE.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
FEBRUARY 2ND, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."  
—1 Cor. ii. 9.

LAST Friday evening, at our weekly prayer meeting, it was my lot to dwell upon the pleasant and painful truths written by the apostle in the first chapter of this epistle. Pleasant in the first and last portions of the chapter. The first part, down to the end of ver. 9, describes the persons at Corinth for whom the blessings enumerated were designed. They were persons in union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and styled, "The Church of God which is at Corinth." "The Church of God"—not according to the world's acceptance of that title, but according to JEHOVAH'S decree, design, and determination. The Church of God is formed of the gathered-out ones, those who are gathered together by the power of the Holy Ghost to the name and to the person of Jesus, and to the enjoyment of the privileges and immunities which God has treasured up in Him. The Church of God knows nothing of sectarian differences or denominational distinctions. It requires not human laws or regulations to guide it, and all that man can do for it is but to perplex and distract. The Churchman will tell you that the Church of God is formed of those who have been sprinkled in infancy, confirmed in youth, and who remain staunch in their attachment to the Establishment. There are others who will tell you that only those who are immersed, who have dealt out *their experience* before the people, and have received *the right hand of fellowship*, are the Church. Well, I do not believe a word of it. The Church of God upon earth is composed of God's elect, redeemed and regenerate ones, who are gathered together to the person of a living Christ without the aid of any of those appliances which



any hypocrite or make-believe can submit to. We see this from the Saviour's own testimony in Matt. xviii. 20, where he describes the true Church: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." There you have the Church defined.

Look at ver. 2 of this first chapter: "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus," separated in Christ Jesus. "Called saints." I leave out those two words in italics "*to be*," because the people of God are not called to be saints, but before their calling are saints, and their calling declares them to be what they eternally are: "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." I like that! "*With all that in every place.*" Oh, what a glorious declaration! Jonah in the belly of hell, down in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea; Peter on the house top at Joppa; John in the lonely sea-girt isle of Patmos. There are loved, yet tempted and tried ones up in dirty garrets and down in murky cellars, unknown and unnoticed by the world, yet belonging to Christ, and forming part of His glorious, elect, redeemed, and living Church loved by Him with an everlasting love. Paul's desire for all such is, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." He knew that they could obtain neither grace nor peace from any other quarter. He thanks his God "for the grace of God which *was given them* by Jesus Christ." See how often he mentions that name, Jesus Christ. When you have a little leisure, get your Bibles and count over the number of times he repeats that name Jesus Christ in this chapter, and it will give you some idea how near and dear the Lord Jesus Christ was to the apostle's heart. "That in everything ye are enriched by Him in all utterance, and in all knowledge." O, say you, I wish I was blessed with liberty in prayer and in praise to pour out my heart before Him as I would. As you would? If He were only to indulge you that you might do these things as you would, the doing of them would make you as proud as Lucifer. He will not bless you according to your estimate of your wants, and will often fall short of that which you think you should have, yet perfection is seen upon everything He does for you and in you. Mark those two "*alls*:" "All utterance and all knowledge." See! I am favoured with all the utterance at His throne of grace that He designed for me. I am blessed with all the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Ghost that He ever intended I should possess. I cannot have more though I may desire it. "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift." What a marvellous fact: "Come behind in no gift." All the blessings bestowed by the Father upon me in the Son of His love—all the gifts and graces treasured up in Him for me, and for the safe conveyance and communication of which He

has held Himself everlastingly responsible. Is that true? Ay, as sure as God is true, every member of the election of grace shall come behind in no gift. The gift of repentance comes in His own good time. The gift of prayer is experienced as my heart flows out towards Him when and where He will. The gift of a thankful heart is experienced when the winter of discontent is past and the time of the singing of God is come. The gift of a liberal disposition which can only be when God gives me to feel and prize His liberality to me. "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Some would say, for the millennium. The millennium! See! It is waiting for a person, for a living person. We are here this morning waiting, not for His second, third, or fourth coming, for He has come again and again to our waiting hearts. Here we are waiting, and we cannot help but wait for the coming of Him whom our souls love. He has come by the power of the Holy Ghost with grace and glory to our hearts, giving to us the blessed assurance of the Father's love, and an experimental interest in the blessings of His kingdom. "Who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ"—that is, in the day when He shall come to take the whole of His ransomed ones home to Himself. Then we have the precious declaration that "God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

The other portion of pleasant truth commences with ver. 26: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." There we stop. Our translators have added the words, "*are called*," but the subject is not so much that of calling as it is of choice. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not"—God's elect not yet born, but who shall appear upon the stage of time—"to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. "But of Him—that is, of God—are ye in Christ Jesus." Why does Paul write thus? Because of that state of things existing in the Church of Corinth described in that painful portion of the chapter, from ver. 10 to the end of ver. 25. Schism, contention, and strife were rampant. The apostle writes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, by them *which are of the house of Chloe*, that there are contentions among you." See the honesty of the apostle. I sometimes sigh in my inmost soul, Would to God we had the same honesty now-a-days! But instead of this

we have confidential communications through the post, or whisperings in the ear, "I have been told so and so, but I must not split. I repose the strictest confidence in you, but I must not give my author." O my dear fellow, you had better keep your intelligence to yourself. None of your confidence tricks here. Satan's mischief always lurks beneath these confidential communications. The apostle gave the Corinthians to know where they might find his author—in the house of Chloe. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." I believe that those who cried, "I of Christ," were the worst in the whole lot. They simply used the name of Christ to hide their hypocrisy. The counsel of the Master in the days of His flesh was, "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not" (Matt. xxiv. 23). The apostle asks the question, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius." Then he proceeds to show the folly of these divisions and disputings in the Church, and in ver. 30 writes, "But of Him," not of Paul, not of Apollos, not of Cephas, not of Christ; but of the Father "are ye in Christ Jesus." In Christ Jesus by the will, decree, and determination of the Father. In Christ by the Father's electing love. In Christ by the Father's predestinating purpose. In Christ experimentally and feelingly by the Spirit of the Father. In Christ sanctified. In Christ saved. In Christ secured. In Christ preserved all life's journey through, and at last in Christ eternally glorified. In Christ we are anointed. In Jesus we are saved, and Christ Jesus is made unto us of God the Father and by God the Father, "Wisdom." We need it, but it is a great mercy that we are not entrusted with it. Samson's strength lay in his head. In our great and glorious Head, far above all principality and power, far beyond the reach of sin, sorrow, or suffering, where the changes of this wretched world can ever effect it, there our wisdom is secure. "And righteousness." We are disobedient children: but Christ is our Righteousness. It is not simply He has wrought out a righteousness for us; but He Himself by His perfect obedience is our Righteousness, and we are made the Righteousness of God in Him. "And Sanctification." We loathe ourselves because of our corruptions, and we groan under a sense of our indwelling depravity; but Christ in the purity of His person and work is our Sanctification. "And Redemption." Christ our Deliverer from the curse of the law, from the power of sin, from the world, and from self. And then Christ is revealed as the sole Glory of the Church.

With the enjoyment of Christ as his All in all the apostle commences this second chapter thus: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." You must not

suppose for a moment that the apostle sought to be considered rude or destitute of taste in dealing out God's Gospel. He desired nothing of the kind. He says, "I came not to you with excellency of speech." Oh, no! He came to them in the person of Him who was revealed in him as his Wisdom and his Power. He came to them with wisdom; but it was the Wisdom of God. "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom," or, as you have it in the margin, "*persuasive* words of man's wisdom." He knew nothing of such outrageous and foolish appeals as, "*Jesus is ready to save you if you will only come to Him. Why will ye die, ye dead, why will ye die?*" No such rubbish as that. "My speech and my preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Paul preached the *purpose* of the Father, the *preciousness* of the Son, and the *power* of the Holy Ghost, and all this, said he, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Such were not to know the manifold wisdom of God. It was part of the Father's purpose that they should not, but that in their ignorance should do whatsoever His hand and His counsel determined before to be done (Acts iv. 28). This brings us to the words of our text: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." A very precious text, containing truths so vast and glorious as to be beyond the reach of human conception, beyond the grasp of human reason, intellect, or understanding. However bright human reason may be, however brilliantly human intellect may display itself, or however ingenious and accomplished the human understanding may be—all fail to grasp a single truth of Divine revelation. But it is our privilege, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, to dwell upon this precious portion for a little while. We will notice,—

I.—THE PREPARED PERSONS—"Them that love Him."

II.—THE PREPARED THINGS—"The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

I.—THE PREPARED PERSONS—"Them that love Him."

Where are they? Where do they live? Where in Camberwell can you find them? Ah, my dear friends, you may look a long way sometimes before you come across one in this vast

metropolis who really and truly loves a precious Christ, or a covenant God in Him. Where does love to the God of the Scriptures exist? The apostle Paul tells us in Rom. viii. 7: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This is not simply the mind of the infidel or of the debauchee; but the mind of the moralist and of the pietist, ay, of universal man from Adam's days to the present is, "ENMITY AGAINST GOD." Not only the mind of the unregenerate, but the natural mind of every regenerate man, woman, or child. Mark you, nothing is wanting but the time and opportunity for the display of the enmity of the carnal mind of God's children against Him. Just think of this for a minute or two. Have you had your nicely prepared plans for a little rest broken to pieces after many a hard struggle, after much tugging and toiling, after much sweat of your brow has been lost in endeavouring to obtain a competency for yourself and for those near and dear to you? Have you struggled and strained yourself to feather your nest and make matters cozy and comfortable, yet, in the mysteries of His providence, all your hopes have been blighted and your prospects blasted? Tell me, How does your old man put up with all this? You know very well that he does not put up with it at all. He kicks, he rebels, and asserts his own importance, nay, he will actually arraign the great JEHOVAH at the bar of his puny judgment. Some of you may say, Oh, you get that out of your own mind! No, I do not. Those of you who are acquainted with the experience of Job and Jeremiah know well how these highly-favoured men, when left to themselves, called into question the wisdom of God because of His dealings with their wretched flesh and their fleshly surroundings. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This is true all the world over.

Well then may I ask the question, Where are these prepared and loving persons to be found? Only where God has been pleased to reveal the perfection of His attributes by the spirituality of His righteous law, and bring poor sinners to see themselves in the light of His perfections, as corrupt, depraved, and hell-deserving, destitute of a redeeming feature with which they can approach the throne of the heavenly grace. But here He leaves them not to perish. In the riches of His grace and the fulness of His mercy, He opens up to them the treasures of His everlasting love. He comes just where they are in the time of their sorrow and despondency, and says to them when on the verge of despair, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3).

"Mine is an unchanging love,  
Higher than the heights above,  
Deeper than the depths beneath,  
Free and faithful, strong as death."

The complaint of the soul that God has loved it aforetime, or from afar, gives evidence of the drawing of eternal, uninfluenced, immutable love. See how the apostle John speaks of the effect of this love in the heart and life of the children of God: "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John iv. 19). If we have the blessed revelation of this love to our hearts, we shall not be slow to acknowledge it. We shall say unto Him, We love Thee, O Father, for Thine electing and predestinating love. We love Thee, O Jesus, for Thy condescending and redeeming love. We love Thee, O Holy Ghost, for Thy regenerating and restoring mercy. This is the love of the Eternal Three-in-One and One-in-Three. But how are we brought into the realisation of this? According to Rom. v. 5: "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

As we are brought into the enjoyment and experience of this love, we may be left oftentimes to question its reality, and inquire how it is that the great and glorious JEHOVAH can manifest His love to enemies so great and to worms so vile. Sometimes we may be brought down to depths so dark, and to the companionship of those poor children of God who can do nought but write bitter things against themselves, some of whom even now within these walls may be sighing,—

" 'Tis a point I long to know  
(Oft it causes anxious thought),  
Do I love the Lord, or no?  
Am I His, or am I not? "

As He settles the disputed point in our heart's experience by the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit, we shall frequently get not one hair's breadth higher than this,—

" Lord ! it is my chief complaint,  
That my love is weak and faint :  
Yet I love Thee and adore !  
Oh, for grace to love Thee more ! "

That describes just the length to which we may be brought in the pathway of love, and it is a marvellous mercy to be brought even there.

Here, then, you have the prepared persons described as lovers. Their enmity to God has been slain by the revelation of a God of love to their waiting hearts. They are spoken of in the portion in Isaiah lxiv. 4, from which the text is a quotation, as "*waiting for Him*." Lovers delight with eager expectancy to wait for one another. They are "a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke i. 17), styled by Paul in Rom. ix. 23: "Vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory." Prepared in the predestinating purposes of the Father. Prepared in the perfect salvation of the Son. Prepared in the new creation work of

God the Holy Ghost. Blessed with the revelation of a preparing God and a prepared people, with ourselves among them, we may well sing,—

“Whate’er consists not with Thy love,  
O teach me to resign;  
I’m rich to all th’ intents of bliss,  
If Thou, O God, art mine.”

We now pass on to notice the privileges possessed by this prepared people.

II.—THE PREPARED THINGS—“The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” You know I am one of those who glory in a preparing and performing God—a God who has prepared and who performs all things for His people—not a God who has left all the concerns of His loved ones to blind chance, wretched fate, or fickle fortune. Such a God as that will never do for me. I want a God, who, according to the Saviour’s declaration, knows all my wants and necessities, and has made ample provision for them. He speaks of those whose wisdom led them to take forethought and make provision beforehand: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” (Luke xiv. 28). Some sentimentalists would have us believe that because of certain expressions in God’s most Holy Word, we are not justified in making provision for the future. I could not help laughing, about twenty-one years ago, as I heard two persons contending, one, that no provision ought to be made for the flesh, while the other, a free-grace Irishman, with a true swing of the brogue, retorted, “That Scripture says, ‘Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof’” (Rom. xiii. 14). But to the point. I love a providing and preparing God. Our blessed Lord also speaks of the folly of a king going out to war without first consulting the strength of his army against the enemy. Blessed be God, He, in the riches of His grace before the worlds were framed, sat down in covenant, and prepared, planned, and presented to Himself, in glorious perfection, all things to be possessed, experienced, and enjoyed by His people. His blessed Word reveals to us the gracious fact that He has prepared for them an eternal, incorruptible, and undefiled inheritance in Himself.

Turn to Matt. xxii. 2—10, where you read of the feast made by a certain king at the marriage of his son. He “sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, *Behold, I have prepared my dinner.*” Those who heard the invitation made light of it. He sent other servants, when those who felt the power of his word made much of it, and came in and sat down to the feast prepared by the king. You read again in

Isaiah xxv. 6: "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." God hath prepared a glorious inheritance for His predestinated children; God hath prepared a glorious kingdom for His own elect; God hath prepared a glorious feast for His hungering and thirsting people; God hath prepared glorious things for His own loved Zion. When He at first calls them by His grace, He does not inform them of all the blessings, bounties, and benefits He has in store for them. If I am invited out to dine, I go trusting to the generosity of my host; it would be a piece of impertinence for me to ask what he had prepared for me to eat. How much more would it be for me to question the choice of the great and glorious Preparer and Provider of all good things when He calls us to His banqueting house, to sit with Him at His table, and partake of those royal dainties which He, in His love, has prepared for us! Blessed be His holy name! That has been true again and again in the experience of our hearts: "He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love" (Song ii. 4). This is a blessed verse, which I cannot repeat too often, and would to God our hearts could thrill with spiritual delight as we think of it day by day:—

" Oh, I am my Beloved's,  
And my Beloved is mine:  
He brings a poor vile sinner  
Into His 'house of wine.'  
I stand upon His merits—  
I know no other stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth  
In Emmanuel's land."

Let us notice a few of the things which God has prepared for His people. Come with me to that glorious resurrection and ascension Psalm, the sixty-eighth. At the tenth verse we read: "Thou, O God, hast prepared of Thy goodness for the poor." What has God prepared? The subject of the Psalm is salvation in the scattering of all the enemies of God's Israel by the sin-atoning death, the death-defeating resurrection, and the triumphant ascension of Zion's Redeemer: "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; let them also that hate Him flee before Him." This is true not only in the work of redemption, but in the publishing of the same by JEHOVAH'S redemption messengers. See verses 11 and 12: "The LORD gave the Word; great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies *did flee, did flee*; and they that tarried at home divided the spoil." God reveals Himself on Sinai demanding. He reveals Himself on Zion promising and performing. He takes us to Sinai, and there justly asks us for that which we are not able to give. He teaches us our inability to do anything in the matter of our salvation, that we may honestly confess it to Him,



and receive from His gracious hands the things He has prepared. Here I would ask, What has He prepared? The first answer is—

**SALVATION.** Yes, He has prepared a glorious and perfect salvation for His people. A salvation finished and complete. A salvation prepared according to dear old Simeon's confession: "For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, *which Thou hast prepared* before the face of all people" (Luke ii. 30, 31). The plan of salvation was prepared by Him before the foundation of the world. See 2 Tim. i. 9: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

" 'Twas His own purpose that begun  
To rescue rebels doomed to die;  
He gave us grace in Christ His Son,  
Before He spread the starry sky."

Salvation! What is it? It is perfect deliverance from sin, from the curse of the law, from self, from the world, from death, and from hell. It is a glorious transfer from the authority of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son; from dunghill depths to heights of glory in union with Him. Anything short of that is not salvation. But all this the Father has prepared for His own in the Person, work, blood, and obedience of Jesus. The God-Man came to save His people from their sins (Matt. i. 21); and ere He quitted earth's dark regions, He could say to His Father: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii. 4). I rejoice to know that the salvation of my soul is so precious as prepared and performed by my God, that I cannot add anything to it or take anything from it. I cannot have a finger in that business. The preparation of it is all God's own. The performance of it is all Christ's own. The application of it is all the Spirit's own. The glory of it is all JEHOVAH'S own. Again, I would ask, What has He prepared? The answer is—

**RIGHTEOUSNESS.** As a sinner saved, I am something more, for, blessed be His holy name, I am a justified and accepted child. He has prepared for me a glorious robe of righteousness. From Bethlehem's crib to Calvary's cross, from the virgin womb of His mother to the virgin tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was a righteous Man—an innocent Man—a pure Man, without a spot of sin or a taint of corruption in Him—and all this for me. He perfectly obeyed God's righteous law, and thus wrought for me that righteousness without which I must have been cast out of God's presence for ever, but in which I find His presence is salvation. According to the work of the law in my heart I found myself to be a naked sinner before my God. But He said: "Bring hither the best robe and put it on him." In the design and workmanship

of this robe I had no hand whatever. The Father planned, the Son performed, the Spirit applies.

“And lest the shadow of a spot  
Should on my soul be found,  
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,  
And wrapped it all around.”

Swain, in one of his blessed hymns, says :—

“How glorious was the work He wrought,  
While dwelling on this earthly globe,  
When each good deed, and each pure thought,  
Conspired to weave our spotless robe.  
Dressed in this garment washed in blood,  
And ransomed from the powers of hell,  
We now free access have to God,  
And of His love and goodness tell.”

A prepared salvation! A prepared righteousness! Every-thing prepared! What else can be spoken of as JEHOVAH'S preparation? The answer from the Saviour's lips is—

A BODY.

Listen to that glorious declaration by the apostle in Heb. x. 5, as he quotes Psalm xl. 6—8. The Lord Jesus Christ there says: “A body hast Thou prepared Me.” This was the real human body of Christ, in and by which the salvation and righteousness of His Church was wrought; He has also His spiritual body, in which the glory of His salvation shall be eternally displayed. Think of His wonderful human body for a little while. It was a body so delicate, beautiful, and comely, so full of grace and truth, that the Father viewed it with ineffable and unceasing delight. In it He could see no flaw, no disease, no mortality, no seed of death. No mortality? None. Immortality was there. Death could not reach Him, and He had to reach forth to meet death. He bowed His head to meet it, and gave up the ghost, saying, “Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit” (Luke xxiii. 46). He also said, “I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it up again.” But look at that innocent, immaculate, and impeccable body. Upon it He bore the whole load of His people's sins. In it He learned how to sympathise with His poor brethren in all their sorrows. By it perfect obedience was rendered to God's holy law. Through it all the blessings of the covenant flow to meet the wants and necessities of His pilgrim people here upon earth. Christ, as the glorious Head of grace, could look up into the face of the Father, and say, “A body hast Thou prepared Me.” Salvation was accomplished by it. Suffering was endured in it. Sympathy abounds by it, and intercession ever ascends from it for me. Look at Psalm lxi. 7: “O prepare mercy and truth that may preserve Him.” Mercy and truth met together in the great and glorious Head for all in living union with Him (Psa. lxxxv. 10). Mercy for me when I

am miserable. Truth for me when I am wavering. What else has God prepared for His own?

#### HONOUR AND GLORY.

Yes, He has prepared for them both honour and glory in union with the Lamb. Do you not remember how the mother of Zebedee's children said unto the Lord, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom?" Jesus said unto her two sons, "To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but for whom it is prepared of My Father." Think of that! Prepared nobility! Prepared dignity! Prepared royalty! All in union with Zion's King and Lord. In connection with this part of the subject we delight to contemplate those words of the King to His eternally-loved ones: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." A kingdom of grace, righteousness, peace, and glory prepared, and possessed for them according to the Redeemer's words, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3). We will notice in the last place—

#### GOOD WORKS.

Ay, prepared good works for a prepared people. Having such preparation, promises, privileges, and immunities, what manner of men ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Fleshly free-willers would say, It is yours to bring forth good works, to do good works, and perform good works, and thus show forth your gratitude to God. To such I would say, You had better go home and do them yourself. I will tell you what I like. I like a God preparing and performing all the way through, and we find by the grace bestowed upon us, according to Eph. ii. 10, that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained"—margin, "*prepared*, that we should"—do them? No! "That we should walk in them." In the experimental possession of Divinely-prepared things, we can be satisfied with nothing short of Divinely-prepared good works, and these will manifest themselves in spite of the opposition of the devil and the incorrigibility of our wretched nature.

The time is gone.

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## REVEALED THINGS FOR A RESERVED REMNANT.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
FEBRUARY 9TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—1 Cor. ii. 10.

THE statement of the text stands in striking contrast to that of the previous verse. Last Sunday morning I endeavoured by the grace and assistance of God the ever-blessed Spirit to direct your attention to the persons and their privileges mentioned there, “Them that love Him. The things which God hath prepared.” It is my lot this morning to lay before you something of the contrast contained in the text. It reveals the utter impossibility for the human mind to grasp or understand Divine realities—the utter inability of the carnal mind to apprehend, hold, or retain spiritual verities. It will be ours then to notice that with which the text is contrasted.

I.—THE CONTRAST TO THE TEXT—“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

II.—THE REVELATION IN THE TEXT—“But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.”

III.—THE THINGS REVEALED—Not simply which may be, but the things which are, and have been revealed to the hearts of the children of God by His blessed Spirit.

I.—THE CONTRAST TO THE TEXT—“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” Here we have revealed the perfect inability, incompetency, and helplessness of the creature to apprehend, grasp, or retain the things of the Spirit of God. The carnal mind is utterly unable to lay hold upon spiritual verities. Mark! The natural eye

hath not *seen*. The natural ear hath not *heard*. The natural heart hath never *received* "the things which God hath prepared for them that love God."

THE EYE is first presented to us in this statement of facts. When we consider this in connection with the persons written to, and the place where they dwelt, we wonder not at the apostle quoting this portion of Divine prophecy in proof of human inability to understand Divine truth. The Corinthians were an artistic, accomplished, and refined people, well-instructed in the arts and sciences. Architectural beauty met the eye on every hand. Grandeur and glory are seen even now amid the ruins of the place. If the eye was so cultivated and fastidious, we may well imagine what the pride of the heart would be without the constraining and restraining power of God the ever-blessed Spirit! But the apostle in the chapter before us points out the creature-humbling, Christ-exalting, and Spirit-honouring truth, that the revelation of God's mind and will to His people in Christ Jesus can only be by Himself, and that to His own nature (2 Peter i. 4); the new heart of his own bestowing (Ezek. xxxvi. 26); the understanding given (1 John v. 20), which He implants in the hearts of elect vessels of mercy. We see this in the statement of the apostle in the 6th verse: "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." They had no spiritual appetite, taste, or desire for the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. There was no beauty in a crucified Redeemer that they should desire Him, and no charms in His Gospel that they should be drawn by it. The beauties of creation, but still more, the artistic production of men's hands, met their gaze, and with these their minds were wholly absorbed. Their whole soul was centred in earthly and sensual things, and I may say, which is in strict accordance with the apostle's reasoning, in devilish things. Let me ask, Which ancient city was so corrupt and voluptuous as that of Corinth? You know the meaning of the appellation, *A Corinthian woman*. A term expressive of the lowest specimen of poor fallen humanity, which will give you some little idea of the morality of a place which was so refined, so elegant, and so beautiful to the eye. But with all this mental and intellectual cultivation the apostle says, "*Eye hath not seen*." The natural eye of man hath not seen the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

See how this is set before us in many portions of God's blessed Word. The Lord Jesus Christ speaking to Paul says: "But rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared to

thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of *these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee* : delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, *to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light*, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." You see the eyes of their natural understanding were perfectly blinded with ignorance, error, and enmity. As Paul in 2 Cor. iii. 15 says of the Jews, so it is true of all mankind : "the vail is upon their heart." The natural mind is blinded with pride, conceit, and ignorance. Nay, still more ; with enmity against God, His Christ, His truth, and His people. There is no desire to see what He is pleased to reveal to His own, either in the beauty of His person, the glory of His kingdom, or the riches of His grace. We now come to notice—

THE EAR—"nor ear heard." The natural ear generally loves to dwell upon the sweet sounds of music. Eloquent strains from well-trained lips oft captivate the heart. Who among us loves not to hang upon the thrilling notes of Gospel music which flow from the lips of those whom God has blessed to the instruction, comfort, and consolation of His weary and waiting ones? How is it that thousands do not? Because the natural ear of man is wholly turned from God. But there is another reason, which I know is hated and scouted throughout the world ; it is this : the demonstration of God's sovereignty in this deafness. He chooses their delusions (Isa. lxvi. 4). And Paul declares in awful but positive language, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. ii. 11). Now if you will turn with me to Matt. xiii. 9—17, you will see that many heard the parables which were spoken by the Lord Jesus, but few received or apprehended their spiritual and heavenly meaning. "The disciples came and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. Therefore speak I to them in parables : because they seeing see not ; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, *By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive : for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed ; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*" This quotation from Isaiah vi., you will find three times in the New Testament Scriptures. First, in the portion I have now read, then in John xii. 37—40 : "But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet

they believed not on Him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, *Lord, who hath believed our report?* and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Now if you will come to Acts xxviii. 25—27, you will find the very same quotation: "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, *Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;* and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, *and their ears are dull of hearing,* and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, *and hear with their ears,* and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." If you will notice these three quotations, you will see that the first has reference to the Father, that in John to Christ, and that in the Acts to the Holy Ghost. Now turn to the portion quoted in Isaiah vi. 9, 10, where, after Isaiah had seen the glory of Christ in the temple, after his lips were touched with the live coal from off the altar, after his iniquity was taken away, and his sin purged, the LORD said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." He was very willing and ready to go, but just as willing and ready to halt when he understood the nature of his message to the people. "And He said, Go, and tell this people, *Hear ye indeed, but understand not;* and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, *and make their ears heavy,* and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, *and hear with their ears,* and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." What does this teach us? It teaches me that God's Gospel is instrumental in opening the ears of some while it closes the ears of others. The Gospel when preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven causes some ears to listen with eagerness to its sacred music, while other ears are heavy and deaf to its charms. But we come down in the scale and find not only is the natural eye blind, and the natural ear deaf; but,

THE HEART is dead set against God and His truth—"Neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." See, no more than water will enter into fire, or fire into water, without the one extinguishing or licking up the other. The truth of God as it is brought to bear upon man's natural heart is hated and despised. Why is this? Because of the very nature and disposition of the heart. Look at it as you have it revealed in Gen. vi. 5: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was

great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It is wholly evil and unceasingly evil. You cannot affect any change in this heart, and God has not designed to work graciously upon it to render it susceptible of sacred or spiritual things. Again, look at Jer. xvii. 9: "The heart is deceitful above all things." More deceitful than the devil! Yes, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" There we have the challenge of JEHOVAH in the testimony of His prophet. Who can answer it? None but Himself. Come to Matt. xv. 19. Here you have the Master's own description of the natural heart. He says, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man." The human heart is a fountain of sin, pride, impurity, and pollution. What is the heart? It is the seat of the affections. Where are our affections naturally fixed? Upon the things of the world, in fact, upon anything and everything but God; they are wholly absorbed with things earthly, sensual, and devilish. Look at the testimony given in Rom. viii. 7: "Because the carnal mind"—or, *the* minding of the flesh—"is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And in the very chapter in which our text appears, the apostle declares, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). He cannot receive them, cannot comprehend them, cannot take them in; ay, something more than that, he truly loathes them, perfectly hates them, discards them altogether, casts them out of his sight. This is all that the natural eye, ear, and heart of man can do in reference to the things of God. Sometimes the devil with his seductive wiles will lead the mind to look at others in reference to these terrible realities, and unwittingly we are hoisted upon a pinnacle of Pharisaic pride, and find ourselves sitting in judgment upon these persons because their eyes are dull, their ears are heavy, and their hearts are hard. But as we are led and guided by God the ever-blessed Spirit into a right view of ourselves, we see, and know, and feel that naturally we are in the same state; we experience what they do not, that it is utterly impossible to receive anything from above but that which He is graciously pleased to convey and communicate to our wanting souls.

But how blessed it is for us to turn from this dark side of the picture and enjoy the possession of the eye, the ear, and the heart, which can perceive, receive, and retain, and which delight to hold in experimental possession the things which God the Father has prepared, and which God the Holy Ghost reveals unto them that love God. Look at John xii. 21. The Greeks who came up to worship at the feast said unto Philip, "Sir, we



would see Jesus." The longing desire of every Heaven-born soul on entering a free-grace place of worship where a God-sent minister stands up to declare God's Word, is, "Sir, I would see Jesus." Now the precious declaration of the apostle in Heb. ii. 9, is, "We see Jesus." How is it that we see Him while He is hidden from the view of others? Because God has given to us spiritual eyesight, and the blessed Spirit reveals His Christ to us, according to Eph. i. 17, 18: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: *the eyes of your understanding being enlightened*; that ye may know what is the Hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." There you have the eyes of an enlightened understanding. There is also the eye of faith which rests alone upon a covenant God in Christ. See Psa. cxli. 8: "But mine eyes are unto Thee, O LORD; in Thee is my trust." There is also the eye of fond affection described throughout the whole of that blessed book of Solomon's Song.

"The bride eyes not her garment,  
But her dear Bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze at glory,  
But on my King of grace—  
Not at the crown He giveth,  
But on His pierced hand—  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Emmanuel's land."

Then we have the spiritual ear given to all the living members of the election of grace. This is the ear which is closed to every voice save that of the Beloved. When His sweet voice is heard skipping over the mountains of covenant favour chasing before it all the guilt and condemnation of His bride, then His salvation is brought home to the heart. Mark! He speaks personally by the power of the Spirit to His longing, waiting children. That is a sweet descriptive scene in John xx. 11—18, where Christ appeared to Mary; but she knew Him not. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary." She knew Him and immediately replied, "Rabboni; which is to say, Master." Those of us who have heard His voice and feasted upon His love can sing with the spirit and with the understanding also,—

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear;  
It sooths his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear."

There is also the heart, or the affection, which can receive nothing but Christ and His salvation, Christ and His love, and can feast upon those things which God hath prepared for His people in Christ Jesus and reveals to them by the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit. Thus we see that the eye, ear, and heart of all men out of Christ cannot receive the things of

the Spirit of God. They contain no place for Christ, but are like the inn at Bethlehem, when a place was sought for the birth of the infant Saviour, it is said, "*there was no room for them in the inn*" (Luke ii. 7). There is beauty in Christ for the natural eye. There is no sweetness in Christ for the natural ear. There is no delight in Christ for the natural heart. There is no room for Christ in the natural man.

Our text is a quotation from Isa. lxiv. 4: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." Oftentimes this is taken by way of text for the purpose of expatiating upon the glories of heaven. But see the folly of all this. If the glories of the heavenly world have not been seen by the eye of man, nor heard by his ear, nor understood by his heart, where is the wisdom of professing to preach upon those things which no living mortal knows anything about? But the portion quoted refers not to the glories of the future state only as grace is the foretaste of it. There is not the slightest allusion to them. The whole of the chapter has reference to present tense realities, and to the present spiritual experience of Divine blessings. You see this from the words of the text, "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

Another little hint here. Some of you may have noticed the misquotation almost invariably attached to this portion when referred to without the Book. Even good and gracious men who are taught of the Spirit, when left to themselves, without their eye rests upon the text, are sure to interpolate thus: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive." Where do you find that word *conceive*? And *what* can the heart of man conceive? Divine realities? Never! Spiritual truths? Not for a moment! The things of Christ? It discards them. The honour of the Spirit? It denies it. The glory of the Father? It will have nothing to do with it. Now if you wish to hear something of what the natural heart can conceive, turn with me to Isa. lix. 12, 13, where the prophet speaks not of the reprobate and unregenerate, but of the living children of God with himself, who were mourning over their own evil ways. "For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them." They were too much concerned about their own sins to be occupied with those of others. "In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving"—there you have the word—"and uttering from the heart words of falsehood." There you see what the natural heart can conceive and do, whether in the children of God or in the children of the devil. But it is a blessed thing to be led by the Spirit into the glorious

verities of the covenant, and to experience those things which God so graciously reveals in the Son of His love. We now glance at, —

II.—THE REVELATION IN THE TEXT—"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." We see that God in His marvellous sovereignty has revealed His covenant secrets to some and hidden them from others. A fact not very pleasant as it is sounded in the ears of religious human nature, for religious human nature hates and discards God's sovereignty. I have seen persons rise from their seats and leave the place when they have heard a faithful declaration of the glorious sovereignty of JEHOVAH, His right to choose the delusions of the reprobate, and reveal to whom He will the glories of His kingdom, the riches of His grace, and the love of His heart. It is our mercy to be led a little into the secret according to Matt. xi. 25—27 and Luke x. 21, 22: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." There is nothing here about Jesus weeping over those who would have nothing to do with Him. You may depend upon it, when He drew near to the city and wept, His weeping was not over the wretched reprobates, but over His poor down-trodden, despised, and bruised ones there. "Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." That is the only reason Jesus gives for this display of His discriminating sovereignty. Now turn to Psalm xxv. 14: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." Or, as you read in the margin, "*And His covenant to make them know it.*" He has arranged to make them know His covenant, and in His own time they must know it by the means which He graciously keeps in His own hands. "The secret of the Lord," the mystery of His love, the purpose of His grace, is with them that fear Him, whether they know it or not. See how the Lord Jesus Christ states this precious fact in John vii. 16, 17: "Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." Does not that sound like an Arminian text? You see there is doing before knowing? Where are you if that be true? But it is the mercy of some of us to know that the true rendering of the passage is, "If any man be willing to do His will, he shall know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself." These willing ones are only so in the day of Christ's resurrection-power. Now come to John xv. 15: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." You see that all things necessary for the spiritual education of God's children are made

known unto them by the power, grace, and indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. It is by the Spirit that Christ opens up the revelation of the Father's will.

Revelation. What is that? It is the drawing aside of the veil of ignorance and error which has hidden spiritual, heavenly, and eternal realities from the view. It is of the good pleasure of our God that the veil is taken away from before the spiritual eyes of all men, women, and children in Christ Jesus, and the blessings of His grace, the fulness of His mercy, and the expressions of His love are revealed. Is that all? I answer, No. A revelation *to* a child of God will never satisfy him: but a revelation *in* him will both satisfy and assure of the Father's interest in him. See Gal. i. 15, 16: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, *to reveal His Son IN ME.*" Not the revelation of His Son *to* me, nor at a distance *from* me, nor even very near to me; but the Son *in* me, blessing me with the consciousness that my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that my heart is His resting-place, where He will abide for ever and ever. This revelation of Christ is by God and His Spirit. You would see that the Divine Three are One in this work, from the three quotations of Isaiah vi. In John xvi. 13—15 the Holy Ghost is the Revealer of Christ: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you"—that is, He shall take of the things of God and Christ and show them to those for whom they were eternally designed.

III.—THE THINGS REVEALED—What are they? We read in Deut. xxix. 29: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." They are our spiritual property, and we hold them in experimental possession, that by the teaching of the Spirit we may apprehend, know, and understand them. Look at the text: "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." Prepared things! Revealed things! What are they? *Redemption* is a glorious mystery of grace revealed to God's elect.

"Eternal, free, electing grace  
Redemption's bound'ry sets;  
And those whom Jesus died to save,  
The Spirit ne'er forgets."

Redemption is one of God's revealed things. Not general, that is a figment. It is particular and personal. I may contend with Arminians for particular redemption, but what will my arguing

avail me if I am not conscious of my own personal redemption? and that I am standing in the defence of those things which God has made spiritually, experimentally, and eternally mine? If I am not redeemed, it will avail me nothing to know that God in the riches of His grace has chosen a portion of mankind to redeem from the curse and condemnation of the law, from all the fearful consequences of sin, from everlasting damnation and despair, bringing them into living and loving communion with Himself, and blessing them with the good hope that by-and-bye they shall enjoy His company for ever, while the others all left to despise, and wonder, and perish. That is a mystery hidden from the world, but revealed to the eye of faith, to the ear of hope, and to the heart of love possessed in union with Christ. The declaration of this is Heaven's own sweet music to those whose hearts sometimes thrill with gratitude at the mention of Jesus' precious name.

Revealed things! What are they? The Saviour says the Spirit shall reveal His Righteousness. See John xvi. 10. In the obedience and death of Christ, a righteousness was prepared for the people of God, not a righteousness which sinners may avail themselves of, if they will; not a righteousness proclaimed, to be appropriated by those who will *embrace the offers of the Gospel*. Offers of the Gospel? I know nothing of them. As for a righteousness only revealed in the Gospel, that is no good to me. God's righteousness, Christ's righteousness, or the righteousness of faith only revealed in the Gospel, will yield no comfort or confidence to me. You ask, What do you want? I want that which my God and Saviour has promised to do. See Isaiah xli. 13: "I bring near My righteousness"—that is, the righteousness He has wrought out for me, the righteousness which His blessed Spirit reveals in me, and the righteousness which the Father puts upon me. It is the righteousness of the law which is fulfilled in me by the witness and operation of the Holy Ghost. It is called the righteousness of God because He designed it; the righteousness of the law because the law required it; the righteousness of Christ because He performed it; and the righteousness of faith because faith receives and enjoys it.

*Things revealed!* Mysteries unravelled. Look at the mystery of the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour. God made Man, and that for me. The infinite God compassed in the womb of a finite woman. God filling immensity, and yet coming down to the lowliness of a babe; God, in human flesh, obeying His own law for me, suffering and sorrowing that He might succour and sympathise with me in those spots of trial and temptation through which I must pass to my home above. Many and marvellous are the things prepared by God for, and revealed by Him to, them that love Him. In His written Word, He has prepared a feast of fat things, and, in His Gospel, this is graciously revealed to His people.

Turn with me to Col. ii. 2, where we have a precious mystery revealed to the faith of God's giving: "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ"—that is, the Holy Ghost, the Father, and Christ. The Father's electing love, the Son's redeeming blood, and the Spirit's regenerating power. In the Divine Three-in-One "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Therefore, all I can know spiritually and experimentally is not in Christ alone, but in the Father and in the Holy Ghost. Do I pray? It is as a son of the Father, a brother of the Son, and a scholar of the Holy Ghost. Have I faith? It is faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Have I hope? It is the hope of seeing my Father at home, Christ in me the Hope of glory, and the Hope of brighter revelations of my Father's will by the indwelling of the blessed Spirit.

In 1 Tim. iii. 18 we have another mystery set before us by Paul: "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Unitarians and Socinians do not believe it; Papists and Arminians render it unnecessary. None but the living children of God, who have been brought by the Holy Ghost to experience their inability to do anything that is good, or to lift a finger in the work of their own salvation, can understand this mystery of godliness—"Justified in the Spirit." Did He bless some and curse others? He was justified in the spirit. Did He call some, children, and others, serpents? He was justified in the spirit. Did He take one thief to glory and leave the other to perish in his sins? He was justified in the spirit. During His whole life upon earth, in every thought, look, word, and action, He was justified in the spirit. "Seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles." This was a dig into the pride of the Pharisaic Jew, a breaking down of all walls of religious distinction in the sight of God. "Believed on in the world." There is no mystery at all in this, according to the free-will-to-do-good theory. The disciple of Arminius asks Mr. Fear-to-Presume, "Why do you not take God at His Word?" The answer might be, "I do so when God's Word comes to me, and is made mine." "Received up into glory." It will be a glorious time when the whole election of grace are received up to glory, to enjoy the place now possessed for them by their ascended Lord.

Now turn to 2 Thess. ii. 7, where you will find another mystery mentioned: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work." There are hosts of Protestants who can see nothing but the Pope and Popery here. These bellow against Popery, while they themselves have as much Popery in them as there is in the wretched old Pope himself. Mark! The apostle said, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." That was before

Pope or Popery had an apparent existence. Turn to the third epistle of John, verse 9: "I wrote to the Church, but Diotrophes *who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them*, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us." What! Is that language becoming the gentle, kind, and loving John? I thought his words were always soft so as not to hurt the most fastidious and delicate ears. Whatever you may have thought, John says, "Prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would; and casteth them out of the Church." Wherever this Diotrophes' spirit is found, there the mystery of iniquity is at work. The soul that feels the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, knows something of the mystery of iniquity.

These are some of the revealed things. Now go to 1 Cor. xv. 51—57: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." See! All the saints shall not sleep, but they shall all be changed. Marvellous mystery of grace! Blessed and happy are they who are partakers of the first resurrection, for on such the second death hath no power. "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 36). They live in their Head, and they live in their Heart. Their Heart and their Head is Christ, and there is no death in Him. Nothing shall by any means hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain; but the hope and desire of our heart is to

" — see His face,  
And never, never sin;  
There from the rivers of His grace  
Drink endless pleasures in."

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." He searcheth all things in the living experience of the living children, and the decrees and determination of JEHOVAH the Father in reference to the everlasting salvation and glorification of His people in Christ.

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S HEELS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,  
FEBRUARY 9TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, *when* the iniquity of My heels shall compass Me about?"—Psa. xlix. 5.

THIS Psalm commences with a call and proclamation to the great congregation to give ear, to pay attention to statements most solemn, most sacred. The inhabitants of the world who are addressed, are styled in the title of the Psalm, "The sons of Korah." These are sons of want, or, as the learned tell us, "*sons of misery, distress, and sorrow.*" The whole Psalm warrants such an interpretation or explanation. These sons of misery are not confined to any class of men, or position in society. "Both low and high, rich and poor, together," as descendants of Adam the first, carry about with them the entail which he left upon them, sin, sorrow, misery, trouble, anxiety, and care. Nay, we may go further, and declare, that with the increase of the good things of this world, there is oftentimes an increase of cankering care and worrying anxiety. The possession of riches gives no immunity from sorrow and distress. But in the midst of all this a voice is heard. It is the voice of the Son of Man, the voice of the Son of God. His words of counsel and comfort are carried by the power of the Spirit to all those for whom they were intended. "My mouth shall speak of Wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of Understanding." Surely this is concerning God Himself. Who is Wisdom? Who is Understanding? Those of you who are acquainted with Proverbs viii. know well that declaration of the Speaker, "I, Wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions." Now, there is no knowledge in Divine things, or in the ways of the Lord, apart from Christ, the great Expounder of God's Word, the Expositor of God's covenant, and of His covenant dealings



with His people in Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus Himself, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, speaks in the Psalm before us. "I will incline Mine ear to a parable. I will open My dark saying upon the harp." Turn with me to Matt. xiii. Here we have a succession of parables, setting forth the hidden things of the kingdom of heaven, in the midst of which you will find this portion quoted by our Lord Himself. He opened His mouth in parables, and there was a reason and design in it; that those who were without should not understand, and that those within might have a true apprehension of the Father's mind and will. Look at Matt. xiii. 10: "And the disciples came and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Each one of us is interested in this fact, more or less. We must be interested graciously, feelingly, experimentally, or down to the depths of eternal despair we must go. Eternal ruin must be our lot if we are left without an interest in these things. See! "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." I love that word, "more abundance." It indicates a succession of covenant blessings, and increasing knowledge in Divine truth, and the gracious displayings of it. Have you a desire to fear the Lord? You shall fear Him, and as assuredly as you fear Him, you shall be blessed with a strong confidence in Him. If you have confidence in Him, you shall have blessed association with Him. If you have association, you shall be identified with Him. If you are identified with Him, you shall have complete equality with Him in grace here, and in glory hereafter. Mark the Divine order! "Grace for grace." "From glory to glory." "He shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." The naturally religious man may have a natural understanding of the things of the kingdom, his natural reason may grasp Scriptural truths, and he may, like the stony ground hearers, have great delight in the natural reception of Gospel truth: he may come to chapel, or go to church, listen with pleasure to a God-sent minister, and rejoice in what is set forth, yet have no experimental possession of spiritual realities. What have we to-night? Are we in possession of Christ? Have we a desire after these things, or are we in possession of them? We are, or we are not, and everything short of them is vanity and toil.

Psalm lxxviii. 2 is quoted in Matt. xiii. 34, 35: "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.'" What things have been kept secret? It was kept secret until the time appointed

by the Father, that such a poor, puny worm as I am should be interested in covenant verities. It was kept secret that my name was written in the Book of Life. An inveterate enemy of God's truth once said to me, "Can you presume to such a height? Have you entered the skies and seen your name in the Book? Have you?" When these questions were put to me, the Lord had not brought me to that place of spiritual instruction and privilege to which He has brought me now, or I should have answered, "Certainly I have. Again and again I have seen my name in the Book of Life." What, your name, Thomas Bradbury? No, not so; but I see my name, Sinner, saved by sovereign grace, and I know my character when I see it written in the Book, and opened up to my waiting heart. But we will look at the text: "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of My heels shall compass Me about?" This is altogether another man than David speaking. As in Acts viii. 34, 35, "And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." So from this Scripture I have nothing to preach to you but Jesus. Jesus is the Speaker, the Expounder of God's Word, the Surety of the covenant, the suffering Saviour in the room and stead of His people. Upon the glorious harp of Divine promise He discourses most excellent music for those characters He so faithfully describes, and who are enabled by the Spirit to lay claim to those covenant blessings He has treasured up for them in Himself. We will consider—

I.—THE SPEAKER—The Lord Jesus Christ in association, companionship, and identification with His own.

II.—HIS HEELS—"The iniquity of My heels."

III.—HIS TIMES—"The days of evil, when the iniquity of My heels shall compass Me about."

IV.—HIS UNBOUNDED CONFIDENCE in His Father in the midst of the sorrows His sinless soul experienced—"Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquities of My heels shall compass Me about?"

V.—THE BLESSED ONENESS OF SPIRIT experienced by the heels with the Head in the confidence expressed in the language of the text.

I.—THE SPEAKER—The Lord Jesus Christ in association, companionship, and identification with His own.

The Speaker is interested in the evil and iniquity which should compass Him about. Was this iniquity natural to Him? No. Why not? Because of the immaculate conception and impeccable constitution of His real human body. Well does the Litany of the Church of England express itself thus in reference to the production of the sacred and sinless humanity of Jesus: "*By the mystery of Thy holy incarnation.*" As we look at His

Godhead and Manhood, and the marvellous union of the two natures in the one Person, we are lost in wonder and loving admiration. As to the production of the human body of our Lord, the Holy Ghost by Jeremiah declared, "The LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man" (Jer. xxxi. 22). Is the compassing of a man in the womb of a woman a new thing? Certainly. Were not Cain and Abel compassed by Eve? Here, I would ask, were either of these, according to natural generation, worthy the name of man? Cain would think so, but not Abel. One has well said, and though the saying may appear to border upon profanity, it is not so, "*The Lord Jesus Christ was the only true gentleman that ever lived.*" We can say feelingly and experimentally, that He was the only true man that ever existed, or ever will exist from the creation to the end of the world. Hart writes truly and sweetly,—

"A Man there is, a real Man,  
With wounds still gaping wide.  
From which rich streams of blood once ran.  
In hands, and feet, and side."

Does not this seem to suggest that there is something awfully unreal in every other man? There is not a real man, out of, or apart from, Him. In 2 Cor. xii. 2, the apostle says, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago." A man out of Christ he did not acknowledge. Jesus Christ *was a Man*, a real, true, and proper Man. William Mushett thus sang of Him,—

"The Man who lived, and died, and rose.  
To perfume heaven with blood :  
To Him my soul her pardon owes,  
And claims Him for her God."

And in the contemplation of His ascension-glory and sovereign majesty we can sing with Watts,—

"This is the Man—the exalted Man.  
Whom we, unseen, adore ;  
But when our eyes behold His face,  
Our hearts shall love Him more."

In the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, and at the 35th verse. the angel is recorded saying to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also THAT HOLY THING which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." The Holy Ghost styles the sacred humanity of Jesus, "THAT HOLY THING." No iniquity to be found there. John speaks of Jesus as He ever appeared in Himself before the face of His Father thus, "IN HIM IS NO SIN" (1 John iii. 5). Peter knew Him as One "WHO DID NO SIN" (1 Peter ii. 22). Paul in 2 Cor. v. 21 declares concerning Him, "WHO KNEW NO SIN" in His nature, by commission, omission, impartation, or infusion. He only knew it by imputation. When I look at the heels of

Christ as a part of His sinless body, His sacred humanity, I see no sin in them. There are no marks of iniquity or of transgression left in His heel-prints on the sands of the desert which the eye of faith can see, and the foot of faith alone can tread. The pathway to glory through a sinful world was trodden by the sinless heels of our adorable Emmanuel as the Forerunner of His pilgrim people. It is a path of purity, holiness, and righteousness, over which the unclean and uncircumcised can never pass (Isa. xxxv. 9). "The lion's whelps," the reprobate, "have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion," the devil, "passed by it" (Job xxviii. 8). Yet, marvellous mystery, in these spots of purity, innocency, and righteousness, He identifies, acknowledges, and owns the members of His mystical body whom He styles in the language of the text, "*My heels*."

This brings us to consider,—

II.—HIS HEELS—"The iniquity of My heels." Come with me to 1 Cor. xii. 18—21: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the Eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the Head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." The feet, the heels of the body, are nearest to the earth, and oftentimes soiled with the dust, mud, and mire of earth. Yet they are so near and dear to Him. Just turn with me to Gen. iii. 15, and notice that precious declaration spoken in the hearing of Adam and Eve, but in the very teeth of the serpent: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." What are we to understand by that seed or heel which should be bruised, yet in its bruising should bruise, smash, destroy, and bring to nothing the power of the devil? Commentators see in it the sacred humanity of the Divine Sufferer; but those who are spiritually one with Him can see in the heel the whole Church of the living God in union with Him as it is left in its wilderness state and condition with the experience of Satan's bruising, temptations, and accursed insinuations.

Look at this in the light of the suretyship sufferings of Christ. I love that word better than *substitutionary sufferings*; because in it I obtain a "soul refreshing" insight into the eternal, unchanging oneness of the Head with the members. Here we see the Head with the heels, and the heels with the Head. All the members in union and communion with the glorious Head of grace. Marvellous fact! In Christ, the Head, all the members suffered all that God's holy law and inexorable justice demanded, or could ever demand. All that was due to outraged holiness and truth was met and answered in the sufferings and death of Christ, and by all the members in blessed, eternal, and unchanging union with Him.

"The iniquity of My heels." Turn with me to Isa. liii. 6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." But look at it thus: "*The LORD hath made the iniquity of us all to meet upon Him.*" All the iniquity of the members of His body, of His heels, those uncomely parts, those parts most associated with earth, sin, pollution, corruption, and depravity, those poor wretches who appear, according to the judgment of some, to have sinned beyond the reach of mercy, beyond the reach of God's long, strong, powerful arm of love. The iniquities of the heels have compassed Him about. "The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." That word "*laid*" does not fully open up the mind of the Spirit, or meet the experience of God's deeply-taught people. Read it thus: "*The Lord hath caused all our iniquities to rush from all quarters with fearful impetuosity upon Him.*" The sins of all the election of grace met upon the sinless Sufferer when He hung upon Calvary's cursed tree. From whence came they? From the East, West, North, South, even from every part of the habitable globe. Look at Him bleeding, sweating, agonizing in Gethsemane's garden! Behold Him thirsting, groaning, dying amid the isolations of Calvary! Then, my iniquities, and those of Mary Magdalene, that walking hell—those of Manasseh, "*that devil of a man*"—those of David, a poor polluted worm—those of Peter, who lied, and cursed, and swore—no matter how deeply sunk these were in depravity, or saturated with impurity, all compassed the spotless Jesus about when He yielded up His sacred body and sinless soul to suffer all the wrath of God, and the curse of His righteous law which they so richly deserved. But the wonder of wonders is that I can preach, and you can listen to, truths so Godlike and Divine and yet remain with hearts so hard, spirits so stolid, and minds so engrossed with earthly things as not to be moved with amazement, adoring love, and godly sorrow.

"Lord, I would stand with thoughtful eye,  
Beneath Thy fatal tree,  
And see Thee bleed, and see Thee die.  
And think, what love to me!"

Dwell on the sight, my stony heart,  
Till every pulse within  
Shall into contrite sorrow start,  
And hate the thought of sin."

In Psalm xl. 12, the suffering Surety speaks, "For innumerable evils have compassed Me about: Mine iniquities have taken hold upon Me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of Mine head: therefore My heart faileth Me," or, *forsaketh Me*. We know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Speaker here because the Holy Ghost reveals Him as such in His quotation from this Psalm in Hebrews x. 5—9. Jesus says, "Mine iniquities." His by imputation. All the iniquities of His people imputed, reckoned, accounted to Him—made His. Martin Luther has a strong expression attributed to him—that "*Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived*"—that is, by imputation. Many have found fault with him because of that expression; but I do not, and I will tell you why. It is because God has led me to see further than that expression teaches. See 2 Cor. v. 21: "For He hath made Him *to be SIN* for us." Not to do, or commit sin; but made, reckoned, constituted, or dealt with Him as Sin, as one huge lump, even the whole mass of His people's sin in the sight of infinite excellency. He stood as one mass of sin before His God and ours, hence the necessity for those sufferings He endured so willingly and patiently.

It was because He undertook the office of sin-bearing Surety for His people that the Father's command went forth, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of hosts; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn My hand upon the little ones" (Zech. xiii. 7). Who is this Man, God's Fellow? It is He who was made sin for God's elect; yes, He was constituted to stand and bear all the sin that was ever thought, felt, or committed by the whole election of grace, from Adam's days until the last elect vessel of mercy is landed safe in glory. All their transgressions, all their sins, all their iniquities, with all their penal consequences, were laid to His account. He was made *all that* in their room, stead, and place, and when that terrible time arrived for the experience of JEHOVAH'S wrath, fury, and indignation due to sin, the hell of suffering which each and every one of God's elect deserved, when Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled, then *the iniquities of His heels compassed Him about*. Look at the effect of this compassing about, and let us by the guidance of the Spirit visit the shades of dark Gethsemane to see that sorrow, such as earth never witnessed before or since, and never will witness again. Bring all the sorrows of all mankind, the wailings and despair of the lost, concentrate them all in one spot, in one person, and even then you cannot find such soul trouble as this. Well might He cry in the language of Lamentations i. 12—for there the Saviour of

Jeremiah spoke through him—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger." There was such a compassing about of the iniquities of His heels as thoroughly shut Him up to judgment, to condemnation, and to all the sufferings entailed upon Him by His covenant and suretyship engagements. Turn to Matt. xxvi. 37-39: "And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then said He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" or, as it may be rendered, "*even to die.*" Death was preferable to such a state of desertion and dreariness. This reminds me of that precious verse we have been singing,—

"When vexing thoughts within me rise,  
And, sore dismayed, my spirit dies,  
*Yet He, who once vouchsafed to bear*  
*The sickening anguish of despair,*  
Shall sweetly soothe, shall gently dry,  
The throbbing heart, the streaming eye."

"And He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Follow Him to Calvary. He goes willingly to suffer with His heart full of love to His poor members, to His heels. Harken to His cry, "I thirst." What thirst was this? Was it that natural thirst requiring moisture for His sacred lips? No! They might have moistened them as long as He lived, but this would have yielded no relief to His thirsting soul. He cried, "*I thirst,*" because He was enduring the hell of suffering which His people so richly deserved. The thirst He experienced at that dread moment was for deliverance from the compassing about of iniquity which He endured. He thirsted for the light of His Father's countenance, for that smile of love which fills all heaven with joy, and for the finishing of His sorrows and agonies in which the salvation of His heels would be perfected. From the midst of the thick darkness of Divine judgment the cry of desertion ascends from the agonized soul of the sinless Sufferer, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). Those who love sensuous worship, for the gratification of the sight of their natural eyes, may have their paintings descriptive of the bodily sufferings of Emmanuel, and their sculptures to represent those pangs which the natural eye and heart can never perceive, but all put together can never portray the deep, untold wants of Zion's spiritual worshippers. Throughout the whole of the physical sufferings of Jesus, when His body was scourged, lacerated and pierced, not one word of complaint was heard to escape from His sacred lips. Oh! how different to you and to me! We murmur and repine, and tell out our aches and

pains to solicit a measure of sympathy. Ah, my dear friends, when we, the heels, think of the sufferings of our adorable Head, we may well hide our faces for shame.

“The Holy One did hide His face—  
O Christ, ’twas hid from Thee!  
Dumb darkness wrapt Thy soul a space—  
The darkness due to me.  
But now that face of radiant grace  
Shines forth in light on me.”

What a rich mercy it is for the Lord to grant us His sweet smile of forgiveness, with tokens of His covenant love brought home to our hearts!

Let us now glance at—

III.—HIS TIMES—“The days of evil, when the iniquity of My heels shall compass Me about.” That expression, “*the day of evil*,” is oftentimes greatly misunderstood. Turn to Prov. xiv. 4: “The LORD hath made all things for Himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” This portion is generally quoted as having reference to the reprobate, and the pouring out of God’s wrath upon them in the day of judgment. But this day of evil has reference to something more than the day of judgment, though that will be a terrible day of evil to all out of Christ.

“When I hear the wicked call  
On the rocks and hills to fall;  
When I see them start and shrink  
On the fiery deluge brink;  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
Not till then, how much I owe.”

Now, when it says the wicked are made for the day of evil, it means that they are made to do the evil in the day of their existence here upon earth. Was not Shemei made for David’s evil day? Haman for Mordecai’s, and Judas Iscariot for Christ’s day of evil? In Isaiah lvii. 1, it is said, “The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*.” You notice those two words “*to come*” are in italics. Have the righteous who are departed taken away from the evil to come? No! They cannot be taken away from that which they never experienced, and were never brought near to. They are taken away from evil influences, from an evil heart of unbelief, from an evil world, and from the evil one, whose only delight is to do evil, to distress and harass those whom the Lord loves with an everlasting love. The days of evil to the Lord Jesus Christ were when the iniquity of His heels compassed Him about. All the evil was from without, for there was no evil in Him. He had much soul-trouble, perplexity, and care, when “Himself took *the* infirmities, and bare *the* sicknesses” of all His heels, the members of His mystical body. It was a day of evil when the wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, and their



inquiry for Him as the King of the Jews roused up all the enmity and hatred of Herod against Him (Matt. ii., *passim*). It was a day of evil to Him, when, from the banks of the Jordan—from the sound of His Father's approving voice, which said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," from the rich anointing of the Holy Ghost, He was hurried into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. To Him the day of adversity was over against the day of prosperity, and so it will be with all His heels. This must come to pass in the experience of the living members of the one family: "For as the sufferings of the Head abound in the heels, so the consolation of the heels aboundeth by the Head" (2 Cor. i. 5). But let us return to Matt. iv. 1—11. The devil came to our glorious Head with every suggestion of evil; yes, came with evil to Him who knew none, in whose sinless humanity no unrighteousness, no sin, no pollution, could for one moment be found. The devil came to Christ with his accursed suggestion, distrust of the Father. Was not that evil? He tempted Him to presumption, idolatry, ay, and positive despair. Were not these evil? It was a day of evil to Him when the multitude of religious hypocrites and punctilious pietists led Him to the brow of the hill at Nazareth with the intention of breaking His neck (Luke iv. 28, 29). It was an evil day to Him when He was forsaken of all His friends, when the devil and the mob, aristocracy and democracy, conspired together against Him. In the garden, when they came against Him with lanterns, and torches, and weapons, we behold Him, in the glory of His Godhead and dignity of His manhood, going forth to meet them saying, "Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I AM. As soon then as He had said unto them, I AM, they went backward and fell to the ground. Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I AM: if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way" (John xviii. 3—8). They did seek Him—they took Him—they delivered Him—Judas to the mob—the mob to the high priest, the high priest to Pilate, and Pilate to the cross. Well might the worshipping company with the apostles sing, "For of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts iv. 27, 28). Yes, God, in marvellous judgment upon the iniquities of His heels, delivered Him over to indignation, fury, and death. He was the reproach of men and the curse of God (Gal. iii. 13). Were not these days of evil? They were, and as He experienced them to the full, so will His heels experience them in their measure. It is painful, yet profitable to be brought into fellowship with Him, and if you belong to Him by covenant ties, fellowship with Him in the compassing

about of iniquity will be yours day by day: ah! it may be moment by moment.

We are now led to notice,—

IV.—HIS UNBOUNDED CONFIDENCE in His Father, in the midst of the sorrows His soul experienced—"Wherefore should I fear?" Was there any cause for fear? Yes, when we consider the opposition He met with from the hands of the world and the devil. Did He fear? He did, as we see from Hebrews v. 7: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." But do you see fear in Him from that declaration of God's Word concerning Him, "And it came to pass when the time was come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem?" (Luke ix. 51). Love impelled Him to seek the sufferings which His body and soul must endure. At one time He was sore amazed, very heavy, and exceeding sorrowful (Mark xiv. 33, 34). Turn to John xii. 27: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John xii. 27). Here we see the sinless One soliloquising and calling upon His Father to save Him from that which He knew was inevitable. He feared, and yet the whole bent of His mind was to do the will of His Father. See John iv. 34: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." To do His Father's will, however painful at times He found the doing, was that which supported, strengthened, and invigorated Him. In the accomplishing of the Father's will He had to endure the compassing about of the iniquity of His heels, His Father's wrath and indignation against sin, and the hiding of His face for the sake of His Church, His love, His Hephzibah. He never halted until he could say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii. 4). Of Him it might well be said,

"Nought could move Him  
With the Father at His side."

Supported and upheld by the Father, wherefore should He fear? All along His earthly sojourning He was sustained in the glories of the Father, the power of the Spirit, and the perfections of His Godhead. On, on He went, and nothing could hinder His progress. Whenever He came in contact with death, corruption, or pollution, He could never contract defilement. His whole life was like a sunbeam shining through a murky hovel, dispersing impurity, yet contracting none. Look at Him in His constitution as the Surety of the covenant, in His work of obedience and suffering, in the consummation of His Father's purposes. Well might He ask for Himself, and on the behalf of

His members, "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of My heels shall compass Me about?"

V.—THE BLESSED ONENESS OF SPIRIT experienced by the heels with the Head in the confidence expressed in the language of the text. The confidence of the Head must be imparted to each and everyone of His heels. Is it a day of temptation with you? As assuredly as Satan seeks an advantage over you, he will be thwarted. He may touch our bodies, as he did Job's, and make them ache, and our hearts to throb; he may make our minds to sigh with a feeling of desolation, and our souls to quiver with dread though his blasphemous injections (I know what I am talking about); he may do all this, and more; but mark! He who said in the days of His flesh and in the language of prophecy, "Wherefore should I fear?" will so inspire our hearts with confidence in Him that we shall say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." A dark, dreary, and anything but pleasant spot for a tried child of God; but he must pass through it. In the shadow of death I want the Light of life, I sigh for the beams of His countenance, I pine for the smiles of His face; but in suffering oneness with Him, my Head, I, as the poor heel of His body, must know something of darkness, desolation, and dread. Though this is the case, He will cause me to fear no evil. See! "For Thou art with me." How near is He to me? As near as my head is to my body. Blessings on His name, He is part of myself. "Thou art with me: Thy rod"—Thine unbending and unchanging purpose of love to me—"and Thy staff"—Thy glorious Gospel, full of exceeding great and precious promises, each shining as a brilliant covenant jewel—"they comfort me." Blessed with this security, support, and solace, our grateful souls cry out, "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil?" When He who is our Resurrection and our Life puts in a gracious appearance, and breathes His own sweet "Fear not" into our trembling hearts, we can then say as dear old Alice Banks once said to me, "*Sin was gone, Jesus was precious, and there might'nt have been a devil. Well, when Jesus is All in All to our hearts, the devil is put to flight.*" Here we can say in union with our living and loving Head and Husband, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa. xvi. 11). Yes, here I may well soliloquise, "Wherefore should I fear? Why art thou bowed down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, for HIS PRESENCE IS SALVATION" (Psa. xlii. 5).

May our own God abundantly bless us. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
FEBRUARY 16TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set us in the way of His steps."  
—Psa. lxxxv. 13.

THE Psalm commences with a very precious declaration of the Church's confidence in the God of all grace, and of the good things He has done for His people. This is not peculiar to the Psalmist, or to any portion of the children of God. Those who fear His name, those who hope in His mercy, those who trust in His Word, and those who are lost in His love, all acknowledge the things He has done for them and in them, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Superficial Christians and professing worldlings will question the necessity for telling God that which He knows, or of reminding God of that which He has done. Such should remember that their questioning holds good in respect to prayer of every kind. Known unto God are all my wants and necessities, cares and anxieties; yes, known unto Him are all my sins and sorrows, trials and temptations: yet He so works in me by His grace, as to draw from my exercised heart and stammering tongue the confession of these things, and He has made them in the experience of my heart so many errands to the throne of His heavenly grace. With them I have waited at His sacred footstool for manifestations of His mercy, and for further expressions of His forgiving and justifying grace.

This was the case with the Psalmist in the portion before us, and we find the same manifested in a remarkable manner in 2 Sam. vii. 24. Sitting before the Lord, he opens up his mind to Him: "For Thou hast confirmed to Thyself Thy people Israel to be a people unto Thee for ever: and Thou, LORD, art become their God. And now, O LORD God, the word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant, and concerning his house,

establish it for ever, and do as Thou hast said." The ground David occupied as he sat before the Lord, in sweet fellowship and communion, was that of covenant promise, and not of his own feelings, thoughts, and experience. Look at those precious words: "And do as Thou hast said." As He said to Christ in covenant before the worlds were formed, so He graciously acts. As He has said in the exceeding great and precious promises of His most Holy Word, so He faithfully performs. As He has said by the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit, so He will fully accomplish. The Psalmist knew this, and in hallowed intercourse with Him reminded Him of His Word and works. "Lord," said the Psalmist, "Thou hast been favourable unto Thy land: Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob." This appears to allude to the return of the Jews to their own land, city, and temple, from the Babylonish captivity. Look at the sovereign care of JEHOVAH over His people, as manifested here. Lord, Thou didst come to the very spot of our captivity, where we lay oppressed and crushed with the iron entering our souls, and Thou didst bring Thy captives back to the enjoyment of those spots of covenant favour designed for them in Thy predestinating love. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people." Marvellous forgiveness! How much iniquity, or how many iniquities has He forgiven us? As many as I have confessed? Ay, and more. It is a truth, that, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). You must remember that these blessed "Ifs" of the New Testament are not conditional, but evidential. They give evidence to God's work of grace in the hearts of His children, and breathe a spirit of assurance to them, that they are led by the power of the Holy Ghost to make a clean breast of their sins and shortcomings to Him, He has forgiven them all their iniquities. That is a blessed declaration of new covenant blessing in Isaiah xl. 1, 2, where the commission of JEHOVAH goes forth to the heralds of Zion, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." In the gracious purposes of the Father, iniquities past, iniquities present, and iniquities to come, are all disposed of: and as this glorious fact is brought to light by the Holy Ghost, forgiveness is blessedly experienced at the hands of the God of all grace, and the Father of all mercy.

"Here's pardon full for sin that's past,  
It matters not how black the cast;  
And, O my soul, with wonder view,  
For sins to come here's pardon too."

"Thou hast covered all their sin." Here we have one of the most wonderful metaphors to be found in the whole compass of God's Word. "*Covered!*" We know that when a thing is

covered, it is out of sight. How is the sin of Zion covered? We will look at one or two portions of God's Word, where this word "*covered*" occurs. If you will consult the account given of the flood in the days of Noah, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, you will see: "*The waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered*" (Gen. vii. 19). You have it again in the mercy-seat (Exod. xxv. 16—22), the lid of the ark of the covenant covering the tables of the law inside, thus hiding them out of sight. You have it again in Noah's ark of gopher wood, which was pitched within and without with pitch (Gen. vi. 14); the wood being wholly covered and hidden from view. God, in the precious words of this Psalm, comforts His people through the living experience of each other, whose grateful hearts say to Him, "*Thou hast covered all their sin.*" As the highest hills and mountains could not be seen through the deluge of water which covered the earth, so all the mountains of sin, iniquity, guilt, and condemnation which were ever contracted by the children of God, are not only covered, but swept away, put out of sight altogether by atoning blood flowing from the wounds of a precious Christ. But look: "*Thou hast taken away all Thy wrath: Thou hast turned Thyself from the fierceness of Thine anger.*" As we look at this in the light of the new covenant, we behold grace, mercy, and peace flowing to us in those precious words of Jesus, "*It is finished.*" When He looked up and cried, "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit,*" there was the end of all penal wrath; of all JEHOVAH'S anger, fury, and indignation against the sins of His people. The wrath of a sin-hating God spent all its fury upon the sacred head and sinless soul of Zion's King and Deliverer, the Surety of the everlasting covenant. See how blessedly this is set forth in that precious prophecy contained in Zech. xiii. 7: "*Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of hosts; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones.*" There JEHOVAH is seen turning from the fierceness of His anger upon the Shepherd, to bestow His affections upon the little flock. With longing desires for the enjoyment of this covenant blessing, the flock of slaughter cry, "*Turn us.*" O what blessed reciprocity is exhibited in all God's ways of mercy, in the experiences of His people! Does He turn from the fierceness of His anger? They cry, "*Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine anger toward us to cease.*" Turn us from Sinai to Zion, from the land of far distances to that of blessed communion and intercourse with Thee. The cry of godly fear and spiritual anxiety continues: "*Wilt Thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations?*" God-wrought importunity earnestly inquires, "*Wilt Thou not revive us again?*" I like

*that.* You all know that I have often dwelt upon that precious word "*again.*" Why do I? Simply for my own spiritual gratification? No. You may depend upon it, my standing in Grove Chapel pulpit is not for self-gratification. I thank God that I do know something of the experience of 1 John i. 3: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Why, then, do I love to dwell upon that word "*again?*" Because I am fully conscious that God has some of the little ones of His family, some weaklings in the flock of the good Shepherd, here present. Yes, here we have some who fear to presume, but who dare to doubt. Well, bless His holy name, He will never damn you for doubting; but will give you many sweet tokens of His approbation, and appreciation of you as the objects of His everlasting love, the fruit of His dear Son's sufferings, and the conquest of His blessed Spirit.

"Wilt Thou not revive us again?" This anxious, importunate, and earnest inquiry reminds me of one who sat under the gallery over yonder. He sat and listened like a soul solemnised with a sense of eternal realities. He heard the Word with gladness of heart, and drank deeply at the well-spring of eternal truth. Almost every time he came to the place he was melted under the power of the Gospel of the blessed God. He was not a murmurer, nor a complainer, nor a jabberer. He dispensed his money with a liberal, but unostentatious hand. The last communication I had from him was an anonymous one containing a five-pound note for the support of our dear old friend and brother Page. Almost invariably, as soon as he walked outside the chapel, the devil would set upon him to take from him the enjoyment of those truths he had so sweetly received, and to send him down the Grove a bruised reed, a crushed soul, a broken spirit, yet very near and dear to his God. Not long ago he was seized with bronchitis, a short illness, yesterday morning off to glory. This causes me to sigh to be after him. But why do I speak of him now? Because he was brought to my mind by this urgent request of the Psalmist, "Wilt thou not revive us *again?*" Lord, Thou hast revived us within these walls again and again; but before Thy servant has descended these pulpit stairs, he has wanted reviving *again.* And some of you know what it is, ere you leave your seats, for your hearts to cry and sigh to your God, "Wilt Thou not revive us *again?*" Yes, I do love that word "*again.*" It meets the doubts, fears, anxieties, and cares which the weaklings in Zion experience in their searchings for the presence and preciousness of their covenant God in Christ. O, to think how often we appear to be covered with the dust of this miserable world, how often we are seeking for comfort and happiness which can only last for a little time, and are forgetful of those imperishable blessings which He has

bestowed upon us in the Son of His love. I love that verse—which you will find toward the close of the old pilgrim's Psalm, the seventy-first—"Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth." See! Are we forgetful of the sweet lessons of His mercy? As He is wont, He will teach us again (Mark x. 1). Are we broken down, and in ruins? He will build us up again (Jer. xxxi. 4). "Wilt Thou not revive us again; that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" There is no true rejoicing for a mourning Zionite apart from a rejoicing God. Then we come to the desire of the living children, "Show us Thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation." We now notice a gracious resolve—

"I will hear what God the LORD will speak." Did any of you come here this morning to listen to a poor mortal? If so, you will be miserably disappointed. But there may be the experience of disappointment in some who come to hear what the Lord will speak to them; nevertheless, it is His voice alone which can speak peace and comfort to the hearts of His people. Mark that word "*hear*." "I will hear." It has to do with the spiritual apprehension and understanding of the children of God. Ofttimes when faith, hope, and love have taken flight feelingly and experimentally, a good understanding in the fear of the Lord is our strength and our stability. Turn with me to John iii. 8: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof." The Lord Jesus Christ did not refer to feeling or seeing the effects of the wind, but to *hearing the sound*. I believe that at that time Jesus was closeted with Nicodemus, and neither of them could feel or see the effects of the wind. Jesus directs the attention of Nicodemus to the sound of the wind outside, and from this metaphor sets forth the work of the Holy Ghost, the heavenly Wind, the Conductor of the joyful sound of God's Gospel to the waiting and wanting hearts of His eternally-loved ones. Now look at John v. 24: "*He that heareth My word*, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life." Now turn to Romans x. 17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." How can that be? I cannot say. I know not how, but I know that it is so. Lazarus was dead in the grave when the Lord Jesus Christ cried to him, "Lazarus, come forth." Reason may inquire, How could the dead hear? I answer, I don't know. There was a marvellous mystery in that act of Christ, and there is a mystery of grace in the passing from death unto life of every child of God. You have the hearing brought before you again in Eph. i. 13: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." "I will hear." There is a waiting for the sound of His voice of love, and for the words of grace which fall from no lips but His.



"He will speak peace unto His people." That is what I want. Peace based upon the everlasting covenant. Peace flowing through precious blood. Peace secured by the obedience of my God and Saviour. Peace ! what is it ? It is the quietness, the repose, the tranquility of God, which passeth all understanding, and which alone can keep the heart and mind of His people in the knowledge and love of Him. There may be the clash of arms, and all England may be roused to the assertion of its honour and dignity by terrible news from Zululand ; but this is a very small matter with Him.

" Our lives through various scenes are drawn,  
And vexed with trifling cares ;  
While Thine eternal thought moves on  
Thine undisturb'd affairs."

It is the want of the experience of this that brings a poor sinner down before a sovereign God, hoping to hear Him speaking His own sweet peace to his troubled heart. "And to His saints." His chosen ones, for whom He has designs of mercy. "But let them not turn again to folly." A gracious command, obeyed by gracious power. "Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him." How nigh ? In their hearts. You see here God does not raise a very high standard. He does not speak of those who have strong faith or abiding confidence in Him, but "*them that fear Him* ; that glory may dwell in our land." What land is that ? If your minds run to that narrow strip of land lying between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, you will see Ichabod written upon every nook and corner thereof. The glory is departed. English chaplains may be found ; but the glory of God's Gospel is wanting. What land is this with which we have to do ? It is the spiritual land of Judah, the land of spiritual promise, the land of Divine revelation, the land of covenant relationship, where "Mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Justice and peace are perfectly agreed in the person of Christ, and in the heaven-born experience of the children of God. "Truth shall spring out of the earth." This is the sinless humanity of our blessed Lord and Saviour, the fruit of the earth, which is excellent and comely (Isaiah iv. 2). "And righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good." Good ! Where is it ? We may look upon earthly things which are comparatively good, but all of them must decay, perish, and pass away. No truly good thing can be found apart from a covenant God in Christ. God's good thing is Christ Himself. "And our land shall yield her increase." From the land of Judah, and from the womb of a lowly maid of Judah, the God-Man came for the good, the glory, and the eternal excellency of Zion, and "of the increase of His government there shall be no end." Now, this "Good" is evidently a person from the words

of the text, "Righteousness shall go before Him;" before Him who alone is good according to God's estimate of goodness.

Looking at mankind in the light of Divine inspiration, we may well ask the question, Where does goodness dwell? or Where is it to be found? One of our hymn writers says:—

"No good in creatures can be found,  
But may be found in Thee."

We see this from Psalm liii. 1—3: "Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." That which is good is not to be found among the fallen sons or daughters of Adam. Look at them in their persons. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isaiah i. 5, 6). Look at them in their thoughts! Every imagination of the thoughts of *their* heart is only evil continually" (Gen. vi. 5). Look at them in whatever light we will, nothing good can possibly meet our view. But as I have said, comparative goodness can be found. We frequently admire and wonder at the exhibition of human goodness; but when we behold it in the light of infinite purity and Divine excellency, we are forced to the question, "Where is goodness to be found?" Our selfishness, even in Divine things, is sufficient to sink our souls to the depths of never-ending despair, if that blessed One who is goodness had not interposed on our behalf. Truth sprang out of the earth, the Lord gave that which was good, our land yielded its increase when Christ appeared upon earth. Now, no truth can spring from the earthy part of man, neither can good be produced in the ordinary course of generation. When truth sprang forth from the earth, it was according to the angel's testimony to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing"—here we have that which is good—"which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). Good was Jesus all His journey through. He was good in Himself, for in Him was no sin (1 John iii. 5). He was good in His acts, for He did no sin (1 Peter ii. 22). He was good in His associations, for He was separate from sinners (Heb. vii. 26). He was holy, harmless, undefiled. That which is good is seen alone in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Righteousness shall go before Him." Not a son or daughter of Adam can stand before God with acceptance on the ground of personal worth; therefore the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world perfectly good to present to His Father a righteous-

ness perfectly good, in which His people should with confidence enter into the kingdom of God, and enjoy the blessedness of communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Scriptures of truth form a glorious revelation of Christ as the righteousness of God, and the righteousness of His people. Patriarchs, priests, and prophets went before Him in Old Testament times proclaiming His approach. Types, sacrifices, and prophecies witnessed to the perfection of the righteousness of the coming One. Righteousness in the decrees of the Father, in His sovereign appointments, went before Him, proclaiming that a righteousness for God and for elect sinners would be found in His doing and dying. Yes, blessed be God, every step of His earthly pilgrimage, every sorrow of His heart, every pain of His body, every wound He received from friends and foes, all the agony and bloody sweat endured in Gethsemane, with all the darkness and desertion experienced by His sorrowing spirit amid the wild isolations of Calvary, contributed to bring forth that righteousness which had gone before Him in predestinating decree and prophetic declaration. But still further—

Righteousness went before Him in the person of the Holy Ghost. You see this in the portion I have before quoted (Luke i. 35). The Spirit of the living God was the grand Operator in the production of the sacred and sinless humanity of our Lord. He went before Him to make a way for the bringing of a Clean Thing out of an unclean. Paul says, "Now that He ascended what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" (Eph. iv. 9). Where is that? My mind runs at once to that chaste, yet sublime, declaration in England's Te Deum, "When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb." From the womb of a sinful woman a sinless man was brought forth. By the going before of the Holy Ghost He was so conceived that He could contract no defilement, receive no polluting taint, nor see corruption. From Him the righteousness of God and of God's elect was demanded. God's righteous law, His inexorable justice, His unsullied holiness, and unvarying truth, exact from all the election of grace an obedience without flaw, a righteousness without failure. Where is it to be found? In Christ. In a perfect, immaculate, impeccable body, which was not susceptible of any error or mistake. He had "a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting," in which, from the crib at Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary, He wrought out a glorious righteousness for His people. At the close of His life He could look up with confidence into His Father's face, and say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." In glorifying His Father upon earth, and finishing His work of righteousness, the people of His choice were saved in Himself with an everlasting salvation.

Righteousness! What is it? It is right doing and right

ceasing to do. It is working and ceasing from work at the right time. This was what Jesus the Surety ever did. Righteousness is set before us in God's blessed Word under a variety of forms. Sometimes it is called "*The righteousness of God.*" Why? Because God the Father demanded and designed it, God the Son accomplished it in the perfect obedience He rendered to the Father's law, and God the Holy Ghost reveals, communicates, and applies it to the hearts of all interested therein. It is called "*The righteousness of our God and Saviour*" (2 Peter i. 1), because in His perfect conformity to His Father's will this righteousness is fully displayed. It is called "*The righteousness of the law*" (Rom. viii. 4), because the law demands it from every son and daughter of Adam, and will not be put off without it. It is called "*The righteousness of faith*" (Rom. iv. 13), because faith apprehends it, faith enjoys it, faith delights in it, and stands before the presence of God completely wrapped and enveloped in it. But let us here inquire—Whose faith is this? Yours and mine? Yes; but not that which flows from our wretched fleshly free-will. It is ours, because communicated to us from our great and glorious Head. I love to dwell upon this revelation of precious faith to me, and I will tell you why. I do not wish to be egotistical, but when God shuts me up to a fact, I am compelled to notice and acknowledge it. Well, I must confess to seeing and hearing very little of a true exposition of what saving faith is in the experiences of God's children. Thousands are contending that righteousness and salvation are wholly in God's hands, but faith is wholly in the hands of the creature; and that God has bestowed His salvation upon us unconditionally, but our enjoyment and comfort depend upon our management and exercise of faith. Such an arrangement would secure the eternal damnation of all Adam's posterity. My anxious spirit yearns to apprehend the faith of a covenant God in Christ, and the faith of a precious Christ in God. This is the faith of the living Head which animates all the living members. It matters not how remote in feeling the member may be from the Head, "like precious faith" will be sure to reach it. This is the confidence of the heavenly Bridegroom inspiring His bride. When I am brought into the experimental possession of this faith, I glory in the fact that the Author of my faith is the Father of my righteousness, and that He is God, the All in All of my salvation. This is blessedly revealed to us throughout the Word of God. Turn with me to Romans iii. 22: "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Is righteousness ours? Christ wrought it out. Is faith ours? Christ wrought it in. The whole election of grace must have both the one and the other.

"Since 'tis Thy work alone,  
And that Divinely free,

*steps of Christ's righteousness are a way in which His people shall walk.* "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, *that ye should follow His steps*" (1 Peter ii. 21). We can find no true example but that of Christ. Here we will look at this in the light of God's righteous dealings with His creatures. His righteous decrees have gone before Him in all His acts of grace. "The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (Psalm cxlv. 17). Righteous when He gives to one and withholds from another; yes, and righteous, too, when He takes from one that which He has so lovingly and liberally bestowed. He is righteous when, with a clean sweep in the twinkling of an eye, He takes away hundreds and thousands from the face of the earth, some to bask in His glory, and others to wither beneath His frown. He is righteous when He gives pledges and tokens of fond affection in the treasures of our hearts, whom He gathers around our knees, and also when He takes them home to Himself to be free from sin, and care, and sorrow. He was righteous yesterday when He called to see our friend and brother Marsden, gave him a glimpse of His glory, freed him from a body of sin and suffering, and conveyed his ransomed spirit to the home of the glorified. There he is "lost in Godhead, love, and blood," experiences the fulness of joy in the presence of his God, and shall bask in bliss and blessedness, without intermission, throughout the never-ending ages of eternity.

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

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#### HYMN.

How safe the state of God's elect !  
 Taught, by JEHOVAH, to expect  
     The glory He prepares;  
 In Christ they live, in Him they die,  
 And harps, and crowns, and bliss on high,  
     Shall be for ever theirs.

This is their long-expected end,  
 The king of terrors is their friend,  
     For Christ remov'd his sting.  
 Deliver'd from this vale of tears,  
 Rais'd up where Christ Himself appears,  
     They shall in glory sing.

The Church laments a brother gone,  
 While he appears before the throne,  
     Made white by precious blood :  
 No more by sin and sorrow pain'd,  
 All he expected here is gain'd  
     In glory with his God.

By faith we would his mansion view,  
 And still our heaven-bound course pursue,  
     In spite of earth and hell:  
 Expecting to be welcom'd home,  
 Where sins and foes can never come,  
     And there in glory dwell.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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CONSECRATED GROUND.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
FEBRUARY 23RD, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."—Matt. xviii. 20.

A VERY blessed and encouraging promise from the lips and heart of Him who never yet failed in the accomplishment of any one thing which He has spoken by the power of His Spirit to the heart of His child. Every word which flowed from His lips is faithful and true. Faithful to the Father who entrusted Him with the promise in covenant before creation's dawn, and faithful to the child for whom the promise was received from the hands of the Father. It is of God's mercy we know that there is not a blessing we possess, nor a promise brought home to our hearts by the sovereign power of God the Holy Ghost, but the same was secured to us in the person of the Surety of the covenant from before all worlds. It is ours for a short time to look at the circumstances which called forth this promise from the faithful heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. We find in the preceding part of the chapter the narration of incidents full of sweet instruction and humbling power to those who are brought into blessed and hallowed association with the Saviour of sinners. Here you will see that in themselves the disciples were no better than others. They, according to the declaration of Paul and Barnabas to the idolaters at Lystra, were men of like passions with the rest of mankind (Acts xiv. 15). Now and again strife and contention broke out amongst the apostles as to who should be considered the greatest, who should have the first place, and who should be the highest in Christ's esteem. In our days we detect much of this spirit. Many wish to appear the most useful, some love to be considered the most deeply taught, while

others seek to appear the most highly favoured. You may depend upon it, we are not ignorant of Satan's devices, for he enters the pulpit and puffs up the preacher with the fleshly idea that by a feat of memory, or the narration of a rich bit of experience which he has treasured up, he is able to make an effect before the people. I know something of this, but my God in His infinite mercy and grace strips me of all such folly, and teaches me not to seek my own glory, but His; not my own good, but that of His people, that by His testimony His bruised and broken-hearted children may experience a gracious lift out of themselves and out of their wretched surroundings. Thus taught, in the infirmities, weaknesses, and waverings of the preacher, the people behold their own, and by the power of the Holy Ghost are brought to participate with him in the rich and magnanimous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at the commencement of the chapter. The disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" If self was not pre-eminent, why should they ask such a question as that? Jesus had told them beforetime who it was that was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The least and the greatest was, and is, His adorable Self. See Matt. xi 11, and Luke xxii. 27: "And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Who was He speaking to? Not to the multitude, not to the unregenerate, not to those who were unacquainted with Him; but to those in association with Him, to His own disciples. Were these not in the kingdom? Certainly they were, but not in the spiritual apprehension of it, and as assuredly as I am in the kingdom, I shall have to enter it again and again. How is this? See John x. 9: "I am the Door: by Me if any man will enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." There you have a going in and going out. If I have entered once, I must enter again and again feelingly and experimentally. It was evident from the spirit manifested in the question asked by the disciples that they were not then feelingly, experimentally, and intelligently in the kingdom. Well might He answer them, "*Except ye be converted.*" Not regenerated. This they were. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children." O my dear friends, we little know what power, majesty, dignity, and glory appears in a saint when he stands before the Church as a little child, as nothing in himself. And what a pitiable object a saint is when left to assert himself, and to make a display of his fleshly dignity. Look at yourself, say you. Well, you may depend upon it, I am taking Thomas into account. I know something of these things in the bitterness of my soul, therefore I speak.

The Lord Jesus Christ proceeds, and says, "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences

come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" He warns the offenders and persecutors of His little ones, those who would hurt, injure, or destroy the peace of God's poor, tried, and tempted children. Again He says, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." *"Their angels."* A marvellous escort and convoy for the redeemed of the Lord all the way through the land of the enemy to that glory-land which He has prepared for them. His covenant care over the stray lambs and sheep of His flock is shown in that short account of the Shepherd seeking, finding, and saving the lost one. Here we see where the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ is especially fixed—even upon the weak, the wavering, and the wandering. Let me ask you who are fathers and mothers, Which child do you love the most this morning? It is that one whose weakness you can feel the most, whose failings concern you the most, who stands most in need of your counsel, guidance, and support. The great, the good, the gentle Shepherd of His flock ever has respect to the weak, the wavering, and the wandering in His fold, and, blessings on His name, He will not let one of them perish.

He proceeds to give His disciples counsel. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." That is a bit of salutary advice. Has thy brother exhibited anything against thee in spirit, word, or deed? To whom are you apt to speak first concerning it? Some one behind his back, and not to one before his face, let alone to himself. The Master's counsel is according to the strength which He imparts, and, you know, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13); so that I am able to look my friend or my brother in the face and tell him his fault between him and me. "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." That is, let him be treated as such in respect to Church fellowship; for such a man, acting contrary to the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, has no claim upon the notice of the gathered ones, no right to be found in the communities of the saints. The Lord Jesus Christ still further enforces the necessity for separating refractory members from the Church by declaring Heaven's sanction upon the act: "Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The acts of the members upon earth, performed in the name and spirit of the Head, are confirmed by Him in glory. Papists and others take this portion to refer to their solemn



conclaves and councils in connection with their hateful confederacies; but the child of God discerns the gracious presence of His living Head with the gathered members wherever they be. "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." I like that—"It shall be done for them." They are not to ask for grace to enable them to do it, for if they thought they did it, they would be proud of their doing. Elect ones are to ask in their petitions according to the faithful promise of the faithful Promiser; then, anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them by the Father and the Son (John xiv. 13, 14). The language of the text refers not simply to the gathering together of the Church in judgment upon an unruly member to declare him "as an heathen man and a publican," but to the gatherings of the saints to worship: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." It is our privilege for a short time to consider the various points which appear to me to stand forth from this precious portion of God's most Holy Word.

I.—THE PLACE—"For where."

II.—THE PERSONS—"Two or three."

III.—THE PRIVILEGE—"Are gathered."

IV.—THE PERFECTION—"Together."

V.—THE POWER—"In My name."

VI.—THE PRESENCE—"There am I in the midst of them."

I.—THE PLACE—"For where." Can you tell me the place where men ought to worship? You see our blessed Lord, in His conversation with the Samaritan woman, leads her mind away altogether from earthly associations and circumscribed places, from all spots consecrated by the acts, doings, ceremonies, and services of men. After He had opened up the very secrets of her heart, "The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me." Why did He ask her to believe Him? Because He knew how strong were the Jewish and Samaritan prejudices in respect to their earthly fanes. He said, "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what, we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Blessed and glorious truth! O my dear friends, true and spiritual worship is not confined to any spot upon God's earth. The Papist may point to his mass house and to St. Peter's at Rome, the Churchman may point to St. Paul's or to his parish church, the Dissenter may point to his temple, tabernacle, or pretty chapel; but, mark you, God will

teach His own spiritual worshippers that He will not be restricted by them, or dictated to by them as to the place where He will open up to them the riches of His love, His forgiving mercy, His justifying grace, and His regenerating power. Has He not proved this to me again and again? Ay, indeed and in truth He has. It was so this morning before I came here. I took up a letter, written some time ago by our now glorified friend and brother Marsden, and in reading it experienced a season of heartfelt worship with melting and humbling power, which caused my heart to bow in awe and adoration where no eye but His could see me. Yes, my heart was melted into oneness with the spirit of our glorified friend, and bowed with him where ransomed spirits love to meet, before the throne within the veil.

“Where?” Go through God’s blessed Word, and you will find in the experience of God’s children, and by the predestinating appointment of their God, that He has His own places for them to meet together, in which they must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Look at the first spot of His appointing, where true spiritual worship ascended up to Him. It was at the East of the garden of Eden, where the guilty pair offered the sacrifice of God’s providing, and through its glorious antitype found sweet acceptance with Him. Go through the whole of the book of Genesis, and you will there see that JEHOVAH’S place of worship was under the open canopy of heaven, not bounded by walls, nor circumscribed by man’s dedication. Come to the book of Exodus. Israel’s place for worship, after the accomplishment of redemption, was the wilderness shore of the Red Sea, where songs of victory and exultation over enemies defeated ascended to God. You will find oftentimes in the experience of Old Testament saints, that the tabernacle and the temple were ignored by God, and passed by altogether, while He took His loved ones outside the camp, beyond the habitations or the haunts of men, to hold communion with them, or to draw out their souls in prayer and praise to Him. In the belly of the fish Jonah found a place of worship. Isaac went out into the fields at eventide to meditate, or, as you read in the margin, “to pray.” Jeremiah, in the low dungeon, breathed out his soul to the God of all his mercies. Again and again we find this in the New Testament Scriptures. The place of worship and the spot honoured and hallowed by the presence of God is not one made with hands, as we see in the case of John in the lonely seagirt isle of Patmos. He was not privileged with the company and communion of even two or three, but alone with his God and Saviour he worshipped and adored. Again, I ask, where is God worshipped and glorified? He will provide a place of worship for His child wherever and whenever He creates a worshipping spirit. Nathanael under the fig-tree. The disciples on Tabor were overcome with rapture. Peter on the housetop

at Joppa was blessed with a wondrous revelation of his Master's mind and will. Paul tells us, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell, but we may depend upon it, that he received the gracious revelations of JEHOVAH without the aid of either tabernacle services or synagogue appliances. It was in the heavenlies he was blessed with the dear presence of his Lord and obtained a gracious lift out of himself, and out of his wretched Judaizing surroundings.

It is no mean mercy to know what this means: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John viii. 36); and also that which you find in 2 Cor. iii. 17: "Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." O my dear friends, it is of God's rich grace that a child of His can breathe freely with all denominational distinctions and all sectarian barriers broken down and swept away. Here he is raised together with Christ high above these childish things, and with the eye of faith he takes a clean sweep through time, and through the things of time and sense, piercing the veil of mystery which hides yonder heavenly land from these lower scenes of night. There he sees before the throne the glorified spirit of Samuel Waldegrave, the late Bishop of Carlisle, who was a truly godly man. With him is Toplady, Hawker, Parks, and West. Shall I restrict heaven to Churchmen? Never. We look, and we see in the same company, a Gadsby, a Wells, a Philpot, and a Foreman. These, with all their foibles which separated them from each other here, are now gloriously one in spirit. One Object meets their adoring gaze, fills their hearts with love, and causes their glorified spirits to bound with unceasing praise before the throne. Shall we stop here? No! For there we see Huntington, Irons, Triggs, and Silver, and others who were near and dear to their Lord while here upon earth, but whom no mortal could describe. From whence came they? From the Church? From the Baptists? From the Independents? No! But "These are they which came out of great tribulation"—it matters not to whom they belonged down here—"and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Rev. vii. 14, 15). Is there a spiritual desire and determination in you to be there? Is your desire because heaven is your Father's house, and your determination because it is the home of your heart? Can you sing with the spirit and the understanding also—

"I have a home above,  
From sin and sorrow free;  
A mansion which eternal love  
Designed and formed for me?"—

Then there you must go, there you must stand, and as you enjoy

the sweet foretaste of the spiritual and heavenly worship of the glorified, you will know nothing of sects, distinctions, isms, and schisms. All these a covenant God ignores as He sends forth His glorious truth from the exercised heart of His own sent servant, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to the waiting hearts of His eternally-loved and dearly-bought children.

“ *Where?* ” That is the place which is most like heaven down here. Where is it? It is wherever the Lord Jesus Christ has revealed Himself to my heart in His beauty, blessedness, and bounty. It is the spot where I have forgotten my wretched self, a tempting devil, my gloomy forebodings, cares, and fears. It is where Christ to my heart is All in all, and I obtain a blessed view of His person, a vital interest in His performances, and the sweet experience of His exceeding great and precious promises. Here my yearning spirit cries, O Lord, take me home now. Do not let me go out into this wretched world again,—

“ Let me be with Thee where Thou art,  
Thine unveiled glory to behold;  
Then only will this wandering heart  
Cease to be false to Thee, and cold.

Let me be with Thee where Thou art,  
Where spotless saints Thy name adore :  
Then only will this sinful heart  
Be evil and defiled no more.”

Such is the longing and desire of our hearts in those very spots where a precious Christ reveals Himself to us, and over which our memories fondly linger.

II.—THE PERSONS—“ Two or three.” He does not say, two or three thousands, or two or three hundreds, or two or three scores. No. He says, “two or three.” Just notice that precious declaration in Isaiah xxviii. 12, which proves that God’s children are not gathered together in shoals. Men may talk and boast of their great revival meetings, but you may rest assured that in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand, these revivals are no more than spasmodic outbursts of hypocrisy and fleshly free-will fervour. May God in His infinite mercy and goodness ever keep me from all such pious profanation of His name and power. Yet I do thank His gracious Majesty that He has been pleased to bless me now and again with a little reviving in my bondage. But look at that declaration of God by Isaiah : “ And ye shall be gathered *one by one*.” This was the experience of the Israel of God all through the history of the Old Testament Church. Multitudes met together at the three yearly feasts in Jerusalem, yet we may well ask the question, How many poor and needy, tried and tempted, sin-sick and sorrowful ones were found amongst them? Mark this! God’s written Word is remarkable for its brevity, and for the paucity of the number of those persons described

therein who are brought to a spiritual knowledge and appreciation of its sacred contents.

"*Two or three.*" We will now look at some of the twos and threes of the Book. That is a precious narrative given in Luke xxiv., where two loved disciples of Jesus journeyed to a place called Emmaus. While they talked together of the things that had happened, Jesus Himself drew near. There is marvellous mercy and precious sympathy manifested in this act of Jesus. The conversation of *the two* sprang from their ignorance, doubt, and unbelief, and yet "Jesus Himself drew near and went with them." This is something to cheer up poor doubting souls who may be questioning the very life of God in them, and who may be inquiring whether the contents of God's blessed Book is true for them or not. The fleshly doubts and carnal reasonings of the two disciples were stopped short by a question from the mysterious Stranger: "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" They then unfolded to Him their doubts and sorrows. From the Scriptures of truth He opened up to them the provisions of His Father's covenant, the perfection of His salvation, and the power of His resurrection. While He talked to them and tarried with them, He ceased to be seen of them. Then "they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Ah, my dear friends, oftentimes has my young heart been moved with sweet delight as I have visited, in meditation's fertile regions, the scenes where Jonathan and David mingled their tears, blended their hopes, and like two doves were lost in each other's love. In life they were one, and in death they were not divided. Interchanges of sorrow and of joy they experienced. United together in the bonds of covenant love, they enjoyed precious communion and sweet intercourse together in the things of God.

Now I wish you to notice the nature of our Saviour's ministry as set forth in the Gospel by John. Turn to chapter i. 36: John, looking upon Jesus as He walked, said, "Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus. One of the two was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus. Jesus findeth Philip, and Philip findeth Nathanael." Here you see one, and two, and three in blessed association with the lonely Saviour. If you will make this Gospel of John a study, you will see how the Lord Jesus Christ gathered His scattered and isolated ones to Himself. In the third chapter you see the solitary Nicodemus alone with Jesus. In the fourth chapter a solitary woman with the weary Saviour at the well. In the fifth chapter the solitary impotent man in the midst of a crowd accosted and healed by the good Physician. In the eighth chapter a solitary sinful woman alone with Jesus. In the ninth

chapter the solitary blind man associated with Christ. So all through this blessed Gospel you will see Jesus, not calling crowds, but individual souls into fellowship with Himself. This leads us to see, as we contemplate this precious fact, that it is not to multitudes assembled together in one place, but to the two and threes that Jesus is pleased to reveal Himself in His grace and glory. But though the promise is to "two or three" in association, it is not denied to little ones in isolation. Sometimes JEHOVAH is pleased, in His gracious and predestinating providence, to isolate a child of His from the rest of mankind, and bring him into spots where His personal promises are precious indeed. See how He gives promise after promise, not in the plural number, but in the singular. Turn to Genesis xxviii. 15: "And, behold, I am with THEE, and will keep THEE in all places whither THOU goest, and will bring THEE again into this land: for I will not leave THEE, until I have done that which I have spoken to THEE of." Look at that precious one in Exodus xxiii. 20: "Behold, I send an Angel before THEE, to keep THEE in the way, and to bring THEE into the place which I have prepared." You see this again in Isaiah xlii. 1—3: "Fear not; for I have redeemed THEE, I have called THEE by THY name; THOU art Mine. When THOU passest through the waters, I will be with THEE; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow THEE: when THOU walkest through the fire, THOU shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon THEE. For I am the LORD THY God, the Holy One of Israel, THY Saviour."

"Two or three." See! *Three* in Nebuchadnezzar's seven-times heated furnace; but the Son of God was there (Daniel iii. 25). *Two* in prison, Paul and Silas; but He who inhabiteth the praises of Israel left them not (Acts xvi. 25). *One* in the lions' den, but the ANGEL JEHOVAH forsook not Daniel (chap. vi. 22). *One* before Nero the persecutor at Rome. Paul could say, "At my first answer no man stood with me; but all men forsook me; notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." You may ransack God's Word through, and you will find that in a multiplicity of cases the gracious and spiritual revelation of a covenant God in Christ was to the few, or to isolated, solitary, or lonely souls. This yields a little comfort and consolation to those who are called to stand up and preach sometimes, when their fleshly natures have expected crowds to hang upon their lips and listen to what may have been anxiously arranged and prepared. But God will teach His own sent ones that His promise is to two or three. Well, it is a marvellous mercy to experience gracious disappointments at His hands. I know what this means, for sometimes He does give me to enjoy the light of His countenance, the love of His heart, and the life He has promised in His everlasting covenant of grace, when very few

are present. That is a very precious word of encouragement given to Israel by Israel's covenant God in Isaiah xli. 13, 14 : "For I the LORD THY God will hold THY right hand, saying unto THEE, Fear not, I will help THEE. Fear not, THOU worm Jacob, and ye *few* men of Israel (margin); I will help THEE, saith the LORD, and THY Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Turn to Luke xii. 32 : "Fear not, little flock." Always a little flock in the wilderness. This reminds me of a precious sermon upon this promise by the late valiant Rector of Openshaw, William Parks, divided thus : "GOD'S PEOPLE FEW, THEIR FEARS MANY, AND THEIR PROSPECTS BLESSED."

III.—THE PRIVILEGE—"Are gathered." Now, I thank God because He does not say "*gather*," but "*are gathered*." His people are scattered and peeled, and it is His to gather and heal them. This word "*gathered*" is the cause of great comfort and consolation to my own soul, yet it is the cause of confusion to all fleshly free-willers. The word is intensely passive. If the twos and threes are *gathered*, there must of necessity be a Gatherer. Who is He? The Gatherer in this dispensation of grace is God the Holy Ghost. All assemblies, meetings, associations, conferences, and gatherings, begin, continue, and end in the flesh without the grace, guidance, and power of the Holy Ghost, and the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the character of the gathered ones. Job tells us, "The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered" (chap. xxvii. 19). This leads our mind at once to the declaration of the Saviour to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans : "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Such are loathed by God. The rich man knows nothing of the gathering power of the blessed Spirit. God's own children who are rich in their own conceit, and, according to their own vain notions, are in advance of their fellows in experience, shall be stripped of their conceit, wisdom, righteousness, and strength, and, as poor vile sinners saved by sovereign grace, they shall rejoice in the gathering power of the arm of the Good Shepherd. Look at that precious promise in Isa. xl. 11 : "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; *He shall gather the lambs with His arm*, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." What is meant by His arm? It is His power, and we cannot graciously know His power independently of His love.

"His love is as great as His power,  
And neither knows measure nor end."

The Good Shepherd's long, strong, powerful arm of love shall reach every feeble lamb and wandering sheep in the wilderness; it matters not how far in sin and transgression they may have wandered, or how fearfully they may have rebelled

against the authority of their covenant God in Christ, they must be gathered. The characteristics of the gathered are set forth in Micah iv. 6: "In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and *I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted.*" Come with me and look at that glorious new covenant declaration in Zeph. iii. 18, 19: "*I will gather them that are sorrowful* for the solemn assembly." God's gathered ones are those who sorrow over sin, the temptations of the devil, indwelling corruption, the deceitfulness of the heart, and the ten thousand evils they experience in and around them day by day. "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden;" or, as you read in the margin, "*to whom the burden upon it was a reproach.*" And you may depend upon it, the burden of sin, sorrow, grief, and anxiety experienced by the children of God is a reproach in the eyes of the proud worldlings. "Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee, and I will save her that halteth, and *gather her that was driven out*; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame." The place of their shame shall be the place of their glory. The place of their sin shall be the place of their salvation. The place of their necessity shall be the place of their prosperity. The place of their weakness shall be the place for the exhibition of His power. To Jesus shall the gathering of the elect people be (Gen. xlix. 10).

IV.—THE PERFECTION—"Together." That is a precious word when seen by the illuminating grace of God the Holy Ghost, expressing union to the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall quote but one portion upon this point, which you will find in Eph. ii. 4—6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us TOGETHER with Christ, and hath raised us up TOGETHER, and made us sit TOGETHER in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." TOGETHER WITH CHRIST. When? TOGETHER with Him in covenant before the worlds were framed. TOGETHER with Him during His sojourn here upon earth. TOGETHER with Him in His obedience and death. TOGETHER with Him in resurrection-glory and power. TOGETHER with Him in the presence of the Father perfectly accepted of Him. TOGETHER with Him as the member is one with the Head, for "He that is joined unto the Lord is spiritually one with Him" (1 Cor. vi. 17). United to Christ the Head all the elect, redeemed, and living members are blessed with spiritual fellowship, communion, intercourse, and identity. As He is, so are they. Where He is, so are they. He, the Head, came down to the spot of His members' sin, that He might raise them up to the height of His righteousness. He came down to all their need and necessity that He might raise them to all that fulness of grace and glory which the Father had secured in Him



for them. He came down to their shame and disgrace that they might be associated with Him in the kingdom of the Father throughout the countless ages of eternity. What a glorious mercy it is to know and feel this, this covenant bond which knits our hearts together, this fire of eternal love which melts us down at the footstool of sovereign mercy, giving us to glory and delight in the imperishable fact that we are eternally associated together with our great and glorious Head. Gathered together with Him here, to be gathered together with Him in glory.

V.—THE POWER—"In My name." There is glorious irresistible power in the name of Jesus. It was the experience of this which caused Newton to sing,—

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear."

What is in a name? There is everything good in this name. If your name has gone down in the market, if disgrace and dishonour are stamped upon it, you cannot get a sensible man to do business with you. Your name and mine have gone down in the spiritual market. We have no standing or right there. We are utterly bankrupt, without a penny to present before the presence of Infinite Excellency whereby to gain favour or acceptance with Him. How then can we obtain access to, and acceptance with, the God of all grace? Only by the gathering power of the Holy Ghost to the name of Jesus. That is the name which stands good in the courts of heaven, ay, and upon earth wherever God's elect and redeemed people are gathered together.

What is in this name?

**SALVATION.** See Matt. i. 21: "Thou shalt call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins." Now turn to Acts iv. 12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

**LIFE.** Turn to John xx. 31: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." There is no life in the Church, no life in the pastor, no life in the preaching, no life in the services, if the name, the person, the preciousness, and the power of Jesus be not there. Not only salvation and life, but

**REMISSION OF SINS.** Peter stood up before the household of Cornelius and declared this glorious truth: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through HIS NAME whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). No remission of sins but in His name whose blood and obedience speaks in heaven's high court for us. In that all-prevailing name we find

**ANSWERS TO PRAYER.** Yes, answers to our supplications, answers to our sighs for mercy, answers to the pouring out of broken hearts before the sacred Majesty of heaven. See John xiv.: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in MY NAME, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in MY NAME, I will do it." Do I pray for the pardon of my sins? In His own name, and in His own good time He blesses me with it, and sometimes He keeps me waiting for it. I cry, Lord, give me a little respite from Satan's temptations and from the seethings and surgings of internal corruptions. He reveals to me the preciousness of His name, and peace unspeakable is mine. What more do you want? I will tell you. Come along to Mark xvi. 17, 18, where you will see a glorious display of Gospel liberty. Here you have

**SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES.** "And these signs shall follow them that believe: in MY NAME shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Can you find any Church, sect, or party in the known world where these things are wrought before the gaze of men? No! But they are gloriously true in the spiritual experience of the children of God. Turn to 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, where you see the name of Jesus is a

**POWER IN WEAKNESS.** "In THE NAME of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ." You see the name of Jesus is the centre to which all the saints are gathered together by the power of the Holy Ghost, whether for worship or work, delight or discipline. You may depend upon it, when the saints are brought to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, if they have anything to say against a fallen brother, or to a weak member of the one body, they will say it in His spirit, and not in their own. Come now to Phil. ii. 9—11, where you find the name of Jesus will command

**UNIVERSAL HOMAGE.** Christ is the centre of the Church's adoration and of the world's awe. See! "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him A NAME which is above every name; that at THE NAME OF JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

I must now stop. God helping us next Sunday morning, we will look at Him as He appears in the midst of His people wherever they are gathered together.

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

Before we separate, allow me to say that on Thursday last it was my privilege to follow to the grave the mortal remains of our glorified brother, Robson Marsden. We committed his body "to the dust in sure and certain hope" of his standing among the redeemed in that glorious day when all the members of our Lord's body shall be presented by Him to the Father without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. I do not intend to say anything further respecting him; but crave your indulgence while I read to you a letter I received from him some time ago, which will give you some idea of his whereabouts in Divine and spiritual realities:—

23, Lansdowne Place, South Lambeth, Jan. 26, 1877.

MY DEAR MINISTER OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL OF GOD.—Pilgrim weary, worn, and worried. Chaste virgin to the everlasting Son of God, having had a sight, or touch by faith of His most precious blood, the *most* precious thing in heaven. So costly, as to the value, it would purge, if put to their account, the devil and all the lost in hell. But it is not.

(I cannot help believing so.)

Oh! to be a virgin to Jesus Christ! How superbly glorious to be saved by His invaluable blood-shedding, and to have His righteousness put on by the Holy Ghost. Made pure and safe by the precious blood of the SON of God. I like those lines of the poet,—

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransom'd Church of God  
Be saved to sin no more."

Such safety have all the virgins of Christ. O that I was one. I have been longing, and saying for many years these lines. I found them in a book over twenty years ago. They suited me then. They suit me now.

"When, when will that blest hour arrive  
When Thou wilt kindly deign  
With me to sit, to lodge, to live,  
And never part again?  
For that blest hour I sigh and pant  
With wishes warm and strong;  
And, dearest Lord, lest those should faint,  
O do not tarry long."

Dear minister, if you did but know my sins and wickedness, you would tell me, or send word, that I was never to enter your chapel again. In fact, to tell you the truth, when I was told that you wanted to speak to me the first time, I dared not come. I am sorry that I sit in so conspicuous a place in the chapel.

The Almighty once let me see by a dream that my tongue was the most filthy rottenness, and indescribable corruption. O my wretched state. I think I must be given over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. I often wonder how much a man may know of the plan of salvation and the glorious doctrines of the Gospel, and be lost at last. Solemn thought! I thank God I have heard you preach many times to my joy and comfort. You have helped me very much. I should like to thank God—not you—for sending and teaching you to say so much to my happiness. It is God only who can make a minister a blessing to anyone. I rejoice to hear that your sermons are going to be published, and hope you will be compelled by the Holy One to preach all those that you have preached in London over again,

except those that are in print. If you please, the others too, for I am one of those who believe that a minister of God never preaches a sermon in vain. Possibly the one sitting on the steps, or one standing listening at the door gets the greatest blessing.

I am tired of scrawling. I wish I could talk to you, but cannot unless put in tune by that lovely One. I cannot help now wishing that He would kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, it would make me rapturous with delight, or, rather, it would put all my bones into joint, and I should walk firmly. I should want to hold Him and *never* let Him depart. I do most sincerely hope you have had a visit from Him one way or other since you left London. I must stop, dear minister. I am weary of my sins, and am worn, worried, and perplexed with the many gospels and false doctrines of men that are trying to seduce us from our virginity in Christ. We cry, Dear Lamb of God, do not allow any to touch us, no, do not let them come near us. Thou art our God and our Husband. Do keep us as the apple of Thine eye. Do deliver us from ourselves and from all false teachers. Let *only* Thy *Holy Spirit* teach us, for it is written in the prophets that all virgins shall be taught of the Lord. Then do teach us Thyself. Do Thou mould us according to Thy good pleasure. Be Thou our Potter, for we desire to be as clay in Thy Almighty hands. Deliver us from our lying lips and deceitful tongue. Do make me speak the truth, and do not let me exaggerate at all.

I heard Mr. Thorpe Smith on Tuesday night. I do like him very much. I hope you are improved in health. I hope you are deriving benefit; do stop another week. May the Lord bless and strengthen you in the inner man in standing up to declare His Gospel.

I am,

Dear Minister,

Yours,

R. MARSDEN.

### THE MASTER AT HOME.

AND art Thou gone where all is light,  
Blest Saviour! passed from mortal sight  
To Thine own native air!  
Where no defiling thing can come,  
Where nature cannot find a home,  
Nor flesh an entrance dare?

Amen! our hearts respond and raise  
Their hallelujah notes of praise,  
Though still on earth we roam!  
To Thee 'tis joy!—to us not grief:  
Not sev'rance from Thee, but relief,  
That glory is Thy home!

We love Thy footsteps here to trace,  
The glory, beauty, and the grace  
Of all Thy walk of love:  
Dear memories!—but would we detain  
Thee here below, for any gain  
Thy company would prove?

with contentious disciples, then He reckons up offenders, then He patiently deals with His refractory disciples, and instructs the injured how to deal with such. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church:" the gathered ones, those gathered by the power of the Holy Ghost in the name, power, and spirit of Jesus. That is the right spot to deal with offending brethren. If we cannot deal with them there, we had better keep our mouths closed concerning them. If we attempt to deal with such in our own fleshly spirit, condemnation in the court of conscience will be sure to be ours. "But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Such shall dwell in a dry land, being rebellious against God, his brother, and his gathered brethren. He shall be cut off from fellowship and communion with the people of God. But look! "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

It was our lot last Sunday morning to look at this precious portion after the following divisions:—

I.—THE PLACE—"For where."

II.—THE PERSONS—"Two or three."

III.—THE PRIVILEGE—"Are gathered."

IV.—THE PERFECTION—"Together."

V.—THE POWER—"In My name."

VI.—THE PRESENCE—"There am I in the midst of them."

It was an utter impossibility to touch upon the last division, or for me to speak out that which God had graciously given me to know and feel at that time in connection with this exceeding great and precious promise. I told you, that if spared until this morning, we would, in humble dependence upon the guidance and teaching of God the ever-blessed Spirit, look at this last division,—

VI.—THE PRESENCE—"There am I in the midst of them."

This will bring us again to take into some little consideration the first heading, Where? The Jews would point to the temple at Jerusalem, a temple erected according to God's design, whose worship was according to His laws and commands. Yet that temple was razed to its foundations, crumbled to dust, and the exact spot where it once stood in all its grandeur and glory is unknown to man at the present time. The Popish Pagan will point to the gorgeous temple at Rome, erected as the centre of a Paganised Christianity, and insist that true worship flows alone

from there. Yes, he declares that the Lord Jesus Christ as the Sovereign and Universal Pontiff is only known in the person of the Pope and those whom he gathers around him to issue laws for the government and guidance of the Church upon earth. The Churchman points to his parish church, and the Dissenter, who stands high in his own estimation, because of his dissent, may point to his chapel or meeting house, while others, styled Brethren, may pride themselves in their upper rooms; but all this is earthly. May the Lord graciously keep me out of all those places where superiority is aimed at. Precise and pertinacious Brethren remind me of those who cried, "I of Christ," while they were as deep in their fleshly mud as those were in the mire, who cried, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas" (1 Cor. i. 12). Our blessed Lord counsels us to believe those not who are ever crying, "Lo, here is Christ." Mark you! A sovereign God requires not any to go about crying, He is here, or, He is there. If His presence is graciously vouchsafed, and His love be shed abroad in the heart of an elect and redeemed sinner, He will not be hid, and there will be no necessity for him to hawk about his graces to prove his discipleship. When the love of God in Christ Jesus is experienced, as we hold sweet converse with weary and wayworn pilgrims, it matters not what sect or denomination they may belong to, the presence and preciousness of the Master will be sure to appear. If it is my lot to spend a quiet five minutes in some retired nook or corner, alone with two or three of my Lord's brethren, to dwell upon a Spirit-wrought experience in my heart, there, the reality of this covenant promise must be verified. If it is my lot to sit and sigh in loneliness and isolation apart from all but Him, and these words of grace are accompanied with almighty power to my heart, giving to me the spiritual heartburn, and tears which none can see but Himself, surely He must be in the place, making it to me the house of my God and the gate of heaven. In the enjoyment of the fulfilment of this gracious promise there is no necessity for so-called consecration, no room for confederacies according to human devices, or political Church associations. Christendom is eaten up with this wretched fleshly rubbish, which is nothing but a stench in the nostrils of a covenant God, who has declared that all such confederacies and associations shall be broken to pieces (Isa. viii. 9—15). I thank God, that it is all of His grace that I have been kept from being confederate with any sect, clique, denomination, or party, and have been placed here as pastor of His Church in Grove chapel, dependent upon Him, but independent of all outsiders; yet, mark you, with a heart yearning with affection toward all who are spiritually one with Him, whether they be Churchmen, Baptists, Independents, or Non-descripts. Those who are loved and elect by God the Father, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost, are *Hail-fellows-*

*well-met* with me, whatever may be their outward badge or peculiarities.

Notice His presence, "*There am I.*" Good old John Newton and Cowper, with a few of the living family at Olney, oftentimes met together on what Church people call unconsecrated ground, but which was truly consecrated by the presence of the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. For these gatherings Cowper composed a hymn, which, we may rest assured, the gathered few would sing with the spirit and with the understanding also:—

"Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,  
There they behold Thy mercy-seat;  
Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,  
And every place is hallow'd ground.

For Thou, within no walls confin'd,  
Inhabitest the humble mind;  
Such ever bring Thee where they come,  
And going, take Thee to their home."

I like that, and I will tell you why. It is a glorious truth for us to know when Satan chased Adam and Eve behind the trees of the garden, he could not chase them away from God. Nebuchadnezzar might cast the three Hebrew children into the burning fiery furnace, yet they took their God along with them. When the trembling mariners took up doubting, disobedient Jonah and pitched him into the sea, his God accompanied him to the depths, to the weeds, to the belly of hell. There poor Jonah had to cry out from the place of worship provided for him by his long-suffering and gracious God. You may depend upon it, there never was such a place of worship before or since. Here he cries, "I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple" (Jonah ii. 4). So it is oftentimes with God's poor children now, cast out, but not cast away from Him who loves them as He loves Himself. Was Paul cast into prison? His God, his Christ, forsook him not (2 Tim. iv. 16—18). Was John banished to work in the mercury mines of the sea-girt isle of Patmos? He heard a voice behind him on the Lord's-day; he turned to see the Voice, the eternal Word of God: "And being turned, *he* saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle" (Rev. i. 9—20). A glorious description is given of John's faithful Friend and Companion, whom he had oftentimes seen before, whose words of grace had inspired him with confidence, and whose looks of love revived and cheered his adoring heart. Now he fell at His feet as dead, so overwhelming was the sight of His glorious purity. Three hundred years ago our martyred Protestant forefathers went joyfully to prison, the stake, and the block, upheld and carried by their faithful God. You see this again in the case of the persecuted Covenanters who were chased and

hounded on the heaths and moors of Scotland by the dragons of Claverhouse, but never chased from Him they loved. We may look through the whole history of the people of God from Adam's day to the present, and in the darkest times behold this blessed truth shining forth—"there am I in the midst of them." That is a pleasing incident recorded in the life of Ignatius of Antioch, when threatened with death by his Roman persecutor if he denied not Christ as his God. The hoary-headed disciple of Jesus declared that he could not deny Him who never did him wrong, who had saved him, and cared for him, and made his body His abode. Thus he was owned and acknowledged as Ignatius the God-bearer. How many God-bearers have we here this morning? It is all very well to have a good memory and be able to produce "The Five Points of Calvinism" at your fingers' ends; it is all very well to be able to speak of sovereign election, irresistible calling, eternal preservation, and certain glory for the elect, but what about all these in the experience of the heart by the thrilling power and gracious indwelling of God the Holy Ghost? True religion is not mere attachment to a sound creed; true religion is not simply storing up truth in a good memory: it comes down from heaven by the power of the Holy Ghost "from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James i. 17). It is experimental union and communion with a living and loving Person, even Jesus who stands in heaven for us. If we are one with Him, where He is we must be. With the enjoyment of this, in the midst of toil, trial, tribulation, and temptation, we shall be able to sing, and that sometimes with a little heart melting,—

"And when I'm to die,  
Receive me, I'll cry,  
For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell why;  
But this I do find,  
We two are so joined,  
He'll not be in glory and leave me behind."

This is true in respect to every state and condition of the children of God here below. In the depths of temptation the sympathising Saviour will be there with His succour. In the depths of poverty the gracious Provider will be there with His supply. In the endurance of suffering and pain, the good Physician will be there with His healing balm. In the midst of disappointment, dissatisfaction, dreariness, and dread, the ever-loving Friend will be there with His solace and salvation. Yes, and I will tell you something more, with which, those who know not a covenant God in Christ will be sure to find fault! Down into the depths of sin and transgression you may be plunged, but He will not leave you there. He will prove Himself a God ready to save, and nigh at hand to bless. An elect and eternally-loved one cannot get rid of his God if he would. Wherever a child of grace is to be found, there, says Jesus,



I AM. He does not say, there I will be, but "there I am." Let me direct your attention to a few of His gracious promises in which He appears as JEHOVAH, the great I AM. See Matt. xxviii. 20: "Lo, I AM with you alway, even to the end of the world." Again in Luke xxii. 27, when the disciples were striving among themselves who should be the greatest, He said, "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat or He that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I AM among you as He that serveth." You see this again in John xviii. 4—9, when the mob came against Jesus, He "went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I AM." The word "*He*" you see is in italics. "As soon then as He had said unto them, I AM, they went backward, and fell to the ground." You find this again in the conversation held between our Lord and the Samaritan woman: "I that speak unto thee AM" (John iv. 26). The first declaration of this incommunicable name we shall find in Exodus iii. 14. Moses, while at the backside of the desert, was favoured with a glorious revelation of JEHOVAH-JESUS. "And the Angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." The bush was the fruit of the earth—a type, in the first instance, of the sacred humanity of Jesus, and secondly, of the Church of the living God, in the midst of which He ever dwells. Moses "looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, I AM the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face: for he was afraid to look upon God." He here learns that God will deliver Israel from Egypt by his hand, and inquires the name of his God who sent him. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Now look at Stephen's noble defence of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God in Acts vii. 30 and 35: "And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an Angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel which appeared to him in the bush." Here we see the Angel in the bush was God, the great I AM. It was none other than Jesus who said of Himself, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John viii. 58). He is the great and glorious JEHOVAH in the midst of His people whithersoever they go. He says,

"There I AM in the midst of them." This is blessedly revealed throughout the whole Book of God. Turn with me to Deut. xxiii. 14: "For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore, shall thy camp be holy: that He see no unclean

thing in thee, and turn away from thee." The purity and holiness of Israel's God appears in this. Habakkuk declares, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (chap. i. 13). Where evil is, He cannot tarry. Where purity abounds, there He is ever found. The universal and unbroken confession of His people is that they are all iniquity, and yet in the riches of His grace and the fulness of His mercy, He has made covenant provision to be with them at all times. The confession flowing from their exercised hearts is ever of their depravity. The whole book of Psalms proclaims it. Listen to the doleful ditty of dear old Job throughout his ninth chapter. Turn to chapter xl. 4, 5: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further." Come to chap. xlii. 5, 6: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Turn to Isaiah vi. 5, where you see the prophet in the presence of the thrice holy JEHOVAH in His temple exclaiming, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." In contrast to the infinite perfections and immaculate purity of Israel's covenant God, the prophet knew and felt that nothing but impurity and uncleanness could be found in him. Listen to the declaration of Daniel as to his standing in the presence of the great Ancient of days: "Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Dan. x. 8). Ask Ezekiel, one with whom a precious Christ was ever present. He beheld a hole in the wall. What wall? That of the earthly house of his tabernacle in which his God had deigned to dwell. He looked and beheld corruption after corruption, abomination after abomination, until his eyes were scared with the sight, and his astonished ears heard the terrible declaration, "Thou shalt see greater abominations than these" (Ezekiel. viii. 15). Come to the New Testament, and what find you? Every sinner saved by a covenant God was as black as sin, Satan, and hell could make him. Look at the testimonies given in 1 Cor. vi. 9—11, and Eph. ii. 1—5. Yet God in the riches of His grace has made marvellous provision, first in the Son of His love, and then by the regenerating work of His blessed Spirit, to dwell eternally with elect men. In Christ, the Father has made ample provision for me. Christ's obedience, righteousness, spotlessness, innocency, comeliness, and perfection mine. By the shedding of His precious blood and the application of it to my heart, all sin, iniquity, and uncleanness are purged away while I stand a blood-washed sinner in the presence of my God. Ay, still more. I stand as

a justified and accepted son clothed in the righteousness of my God and Saviour. It is His determination to save and succour me. So, as He walks in the midst of my camp, He sees a holiness of His own providing. He has given up my enemies, sin, death, hell, Satan, the world, and the flesh to judgment. He sees no unclean thing, and will not, cannot, turn from me in anger. As He comes walking, His feet bring salvation and sweet deliverance, and by the declaration of His mind and will I enjoy my standing in the presence of His Father accepted in Him, the Beloved.

*"In the midst of them."* This was His position in covenant before the worlds were framed. According to the good pleasure of the Father there He was with all the election of grace in eternal and unchanging union with Him. This is expressed in a blessed and heavenly manner in Zeph. iii. 17: "*The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing.*" Christ in covenant is Christ in communication, and here we see Him in the midst of His elect brethren singing and rejoicing at the accomplishment of salvation in the midst of the earth. The mighty JEHOVAH-JESUS in the midst of His people will save them. As their Creator, Proprietor, Sovereign, and Governor, He proceeded from the midst of them (Jer. xxx. 21). He became one with them in incarnation, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. In His true, proper, sinless, and impeccable humanity He was perfectly identified with them through a life of sorrow and suffering upon earth. In His human nature He performed everything for them that the Father's infinite justice demanded, and which His inscrutable wisdom saw was necessary to bring them to enjoy His sacred presence and to feast upon His love. From the lap of His mother in Bethlehem to the bosom of His Father in glory, we see Him obedient to every precept of the Divine law, and in His atoning sufferings we behold Him submissive to all God's righteous will. It may be asked what do I mean by His atoning sufferings. I do not mean that fleshly rubbish which some talk about as *the unatoning sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ*. I know nothing at all about such. I am only acquainted with the atoning sufferings of my Lord and Saviour, those endured in every pain of His body, in every sorrow of His heart, in every anguish of His mind, in every bitterness of His soul, until He yielded up to the Father perfect satisfaction for the sins of His people. Ay, and this satisfaction infinite in its value and eternal in its duration, because of the greatness and glory of His person. We now come to notice Him as He appears accomplishing the salvation of His Church.

*"In the midst."* Come to John xix. 17, 18: "And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha; where they crucified

Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and *Jesus in the midst.*" There we see Him in the midst of all that was bad, abominable, impure, and sinful. In respect to the persons, two thieves. In respect to the place, that of a skull. In respect to His position, surrounded and laden with all the sins of His elect people. All the sins, transgressions, iniquities, offences, infirmities, imperfections, and impurities of His members rushed upon Him, as the Surety of the covenant, from East, West, North, and South. From Manchester, from Haydock, from Barrow-hill, from Camberwell, and from Grove chapel pulpit they rushed upon Him. Why do I enumerate these parts? Because in every one of them I have sinned, manifested base ingratitude against the God of all my mercies, and a want of thankfulness to Him for His rich and distinguishing grace in keeping me one moment outside hell's gates. As I think of this, all the sins of all His people pouring from all quarters upon the sacred head of Zion's Surety and Saviour, and mine the most aggravated of all—as I think of this, I would weep tears of thankfulness and love, but I cannot. I stand amazed at the coldness and indifference of this wretched heart of mine, and yet, sometimes, I do sing with a little feeling and emotion,—

" Lord, I would stand with thoughtful eye,  
Beneath Thy fatal tree,  
And see Thee bleed, and see Thee die,  
And think ' what love to me !'

Dwell on the sight, my stony heart,  
Till every pulse within  
Shall into contrite sorrow start,  
And hate the thought of sin.

Didst Thou for me, my Saviour, brave  
The scoff, the scourge, the gall.  
The nails, the thorns, the spear, the grave,  
While I deserved them all."

It is a marvel of marvels that we who are spiritually and experimentally acquainted with these vital truths can repeat them and yet remain so dull, so dark, and so dead. But sometimes He comes by the power of His Spirit and gently leads our hearts into the sweet enjoyment of the benefits of His precious blood-shedding, and the blessings which are ours through His sufferings and death, causing our hearts to sing,—

" Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,  
Which before the cross I spend,  
Life, and health, and peace possessing,  
From the sinner's dying Friend.  
Here I'd sit for ever viewing  
Mercy's streams, in streams of blood ;  
Precious drops ! my soul bedewing,  
Plead and claim my peace with God."

*In the midst of sin, death, and condemnation a voice was heard which filled all heaven with joy, hell with consternation,*

the earth with trembling, and the hearts of eternally-loved sinners with consolation. Jesus said, "IT IS FINISHED." In His incarnation He took part of the same flesh and blood with His people. His divine and human natures, as Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, says, "*never to be divided.*" In the midst of judgment He stood, and all His elect ones with Him. When He suffered, they suffered in Him. When He died, they were dead in Him. When He cried, "It is finished," salvation was finished for them. In the fulness of time—the time fixed in the counsels of the Father—all interested in these covenant verities must be brought into a vital knowledge and experience of them. Was He in the midst of all their sin, and shame, and condemnation? They shall stand in the midst of His grace, goodness, and glory.

This is blessedly revealed in that precious scene described by the Holy Ghost in John viii. 1—11. Punctilious Pharisees brought one of Satan's waifs and strays into the presence of Jesus, and set her in the midst. "They say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery: in the very act." Had they seen themselves in the light of His perfections, they would not have exposed the sin of this poor woman. But they hated Jesus, and through her tempted Him, that they might have to accuse Him. Twice He stooped and wrote on the ground something they did not like, and said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, *and the woman standing in the midst.*" That looks like reversing the order of the text. And so it is. The poor woman stood in the midst of all His spiritual excellencies, and was there accepted of Him. He stood in the midst of our sin that we might stand in the midst of His salvation. He stood in the midst of our condemnation that we might stand in the midst of His justification. He stood in the midst of our shame that we might stand in the midst of His glory. He stood loaded with our disgrace and imperfections that we might rest in His comeliness and perfections. So it was with this woman whom Jesus loved. "Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing *in the midst.*" What think ye of this? Christ in the midst of His people, and His people in the midst of Him. As we are led by the blessed Spirit through the pages of the written Word, we find all this gloriously true, for, on the ground of His accomplished redemption, His people enjoy spiritual communion and fellowship with Him in all that He is and all that He has as the Mediator of the New Testament. But we must pass away from this to another view of Jesus.

"*In the midst.*" Turn to John xx. 19: "Then the same day, at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the

Jews, *came Jesus, and stood in the midst*, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." This was on the resurrection side of the cross, death, and condemnation. There are those who would have us believe that to be associated with Christ upon resurrection ground always ensures happiness, joy, and peace in the Lord. Don't you believe it. I wish you now to notice the characters and peculiarities of those who were the companions of our Lord on resurrection ground. These among whom Jesus stood were assembled together for fear of the Jews. Fearing disciples, with Jesus *in the midst*. Come with me to that wonderful chapter, Mark xvi. I do think there is not a more wonderful chapter in the whole of God's Book. Here we see the seekers and associates of Jesus after His resurrection. In the 5th and 6th verses we see seekers affrighted, to whom the angel said, "Be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. He is risen; He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him." Look at the 8th verse: "And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre, for *they trembled and were amazed*: neither said they anything to any man: *for they were afraid*." Do you notice the different states of mind? Affrighted! Trembling! Amazed! Afraid! Come to the 9th verse: "Now, when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils." Was not a risen Jesus gracious to own such an one first as His companion? But look at the 10th verse: "And she went and told them that had been with Him *as they mourned and wept*." These were mourners in Zion loved by their risen Lord. Notice the next three verses: "*And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not*." After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: *neither believed they them*." Unbelieving disciples, loved, sought, and saved by a precious Saviour. This is vastly different to the namby-pamby profession of the present day, which makes believing a prerequisite for every saving mercy. Blessed be God,

"He makes the believer, and gives him his crown."

But look at that glorious chapter, Luke xxiv. Here the Lord Jesus Christ appears to the two, who, on their way to Emmaus, were talking of the things which had happened, and were sad, distressed, harassed, and perplexed, feeling that all their expectations had come to grief. Jesus drew near, and from their sad hearts drew the confession of their sadness. He said, as none other had a right to say, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." They arrived

at their destination, when, at their urgent request, He went in to tarry with them. Their eyes were opened—they knew Him. He vanished out of their sight. Notice the heart-felt experience of these two tempted and tried disciples, to whom Jesus said, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe.” “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?” Doubting, fearing disciples experiencing the spiritual heartburn in union with Christ on resurrection ground.

“*In the midst*” of His worshipping twos and threes a precious Christ is found. Wherever there is prayer, praise, and preaching by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, the covenant promise is verified, “There I AM.” There can be no true worship of a covenant God in Christ, but upon resurrection ground, where sinners are saved, Satan defeated, Christ risen, and God glorified. We now come to notice that glorious declaration in Rev. v. 6: “*In the midst* of the throne and of the four *living creatures*, and *in the midst* of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain.”

“Christ is the centre of worship in heaven,  
Christ, the Rejected One here among men,  
None other name of salvation is given;  
JESUS-JEHOVAH, the Lamb that was slain.”

Look at that glorious throng! “Whence come they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is *in the midst* of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

“*In the midst*” of Zion He is help and salvation (Psa. xli. 5).

ii. 5). “*In the midst*” of Jerusalem He is defence and glory (Zech.

ii. 12). “*In the midst*” of the Church He is joy and gladness (Heb.

“*In the midst*” of heaven He is ALL IN ALL.

May He add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## GARMENTS UNDEFILED.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
MARCH 9TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with Me in white : for they are worthy."—Rev. iii. 4.

THESE words form part of a gracious revelation of the great King-Priest to one of the elders, pastors, or bishops of the seven Churches in Asia Minor. It is not my intention to consider this portion either historically or prophetically, but according to the teaching of God the ever-blessed Spirit in the heart's experience of all those who are led by Him into grace-union with our Lord Jesus Christ. This epistle commences thus : "And unto the angel of the Church in Sardis write." Why does the Lord Jesus designate this minister, or any of the ministers of the New Testament, angel? There is a reason, which He makes apparent upon the face of Divine inspiration, and in the experience of His people. They are styled angels because, according to the meaning of the word, they are His sent ones. This you see in Romans x. 14, 15 : "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach *except they be sent*? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" But who sends them? He who called them, taught them, encouraged them, and ordained them. See Mark iii. 13, 14 : "And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would : and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that *He might send them forth* to preach." From the Mount of Acceptance He now sends forth His ministers. He gives them their subjects; He finds them their texts; He provides them with matter; He



furnishes them with words; He assembles their hearers. I do not mean that He will send them a chapel full; but He will provide them with those very hearers for whom His covenant mercies were designed, and the consolations which their message should convey. It is all of His mercy that I was sent here with His testimony of free and sovereign love—that I stand here as the angel, messenger, and minister of His Church in this place. But notice the words “The angel of *the Church*.” The sent one to those who are separated and gathered out from the corrupt mass of mankind. Those who are sent are the servants of those to whom they are sent—the elect, redeemed, and regenerate children of God. “The Church in *Sardis*.” Sardis was the capital of ancient Lydia, the centre of the kingdom of the mighty and wealthy Croesus, and one of the most influential cities in ancient times. In the apostles’ days its chief characteristic was voluptuousness. Surrounded by vice and villainy, a little band of God’s elect was gathered to worship their glorified King and Lord, to listen to His covenant commands, and to experience His power. He ever remembered them, and sent them words of loving counsel and encouragement. Look at His address to His minister in Sardis: “These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.” It is a marvellous mercy for us to know that the Lord Jesus Christ has the perfection in His own hands. No stint, no lack; no, not even in the midst of the almost universal declension of the present day, when on every hand His truth is despised and His people hated. Truth is fallen in the streets, and the labourers in the Gospel harvest field are few. We sigh, and we long for more, and sometimes, as we look at the hirelings in the Establishment, and outside of it, we are foolish enough to think if we had our way we would make short work with them. But, as we are brought to look at these things in a right spirit, we would not interfere with one of them. Why not? Because we could not produce one better qualified to fill their places. Therefore it is mine to study to be quiet and do my own business among His people where He in His predestinating providence has placed me. He has the very perfection of wisdom and power in the person of the Holy Ghost at His command. For the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Son pleads and commands. The Father purposes and performs. The Spirit proves His power in the abundance, diversity, and perfection of ministry upon earth. But Christ proceeds, “I know thy works.” What a blessed truth! It is a source of sweet encouragement for us to consider this morning that our ever-pitying Jesus knows all about our works. This would be enough to frighten us all out of our wits if we were standing on any other ground than that of the new covenant; but there we stand before Him without fear or amazement, enjoying the precious privileges of Israelites indeed in whom is no guile. He knows all about us, our sinfulness, our

incorrigibility, our depravity, our enmity, our evil thoughts, and our evil works which He will utterly abolish, while He will own and honour all the good works which He has prepared and performed in us. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead." Here you have a solemn picture. A Church professing life, yet dead in the presence of God. He counsels its pastor: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard." This may prove a word in season to some of us this morning. How have we received? We read of certain in Matt. xiii. 20, 21, who receive the Word with joy, yet have they no root in themselves; but when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by-and-bye they are offended. All such religion flies when the testing fire is applied. Look at the difference between such and those mentioned in 1 Thess. i. 6: "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, *having received the Word in much affliction*, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Such a receiving is with applying power and abiding grace. Some of us can remember the day when we received the Word with eagerness, with desire, and with a determination that would not be put off. Then we experienced an aching void that nothing but Himself could fill and truly satisfy. "Remember, therefore, how thou hast heard." I know how I heard in days gone by; it was with greater joy and pleasure than I oftentimes do now. I heard words of thrilling eloquence and burning power flowing from the exercised heart of a Heaven-sent messenger, and testifying of the sympathy of a once suffering Saviour, and the grace of a now glorified Redeemer. "And hold fast." Why this command to hold fast? Because of the tendency of God's weaklings to let go their hold of pure, sterling, undiluted truth in days of compromise. "Hold fast and repent." Was it possible that such a command was necessary to a Church, and to a pastor? Yes, for there is not a Church or pastor in all creation but what stands in need day by day, and week by week, of this covenant command from the lips of the great King-Priest. Where is true repentance experienced? In Gethsemane and at Calvary, and only when a suffering Saviour is brought to view—only in the fulfilment of that prophecy in Zech. xii. 10: "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." The epistle continues: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief"—that is, unexpectedly—"and thou shalt not know what hour I will come to thee." Then we have the blessed communication contained in the words of the text: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy."

We will notice—

I.—THE REMNANT—"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

II.—THE REWARD—"And they shall walk with Me in white."

III.—THE REASON—"For they are worthy."

I.—THE REMNANT—"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis." A few names. Why does not the Lord Jesus Christ say to the angel of the Church, "*a few persons?*" There is a reason, and we have not a peculiar statement made in the whole of God's Word without a reason. In the volume of inspired truth we find no superfluity, no lack. Every word is given in infinite wisdom. Each portion has its own truth to reveal. One very well said to me, long years ago, "You may depend upon it that every nut growing upon the tree of inspiration will yield its own kernel and no more. "*A few names.*" Let us look at this. What are the names of God's children? If we seek for a name in connection with that word "*few*," our minds are led at once to God's grand, irrevocable, unconditional, and eternal decree of election. There are *few* in the present day among the vast mass of professors who dare even to read certain portions of God's most Holy Word, where the God-glorifying doctrine of election is revealed in its fulness and preciousness. I have known positively that such parts as chapters viii., ix., and xi. of the epistle to the Romans have been ripped out of the Bible. Yes, and to such lengths has pious enmity run as to cause an old Quaker to say, "When the apostle Paul wrote upon election, he did so in his own spirit, and deserved a good horse-whipping for thus marring the fair beauty of the Bible." The devilish enmity and opposition of the carnal mind of man against the God of truth, and against the truth of God, is revealed from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. But, blessed be the name of our covenant God, He has a people whom He loves with an everlasting love, whom He elected and selected from the rest of mankind to Himself, in whom He will be eternally and unceasingly glorified, to whom He will reveal the riches of His grace, and upon whom He will lavish the riches of His glory throughout a never-ending eternity. God's Word is full of this glorious truth, though few believe it. Turn with me to Romans xi. 2, &c. The statement of it here is in strict accordance with the words of the text: "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, and digged down Thine altars: and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto Him? I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." In the decrees and counsels of God before time was, a portion of mankind was given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and throughout all time, from Adam's days

until the last elect vessel of mercy is caught up to glory, a remnant of the election of grace must be found in the earth. This remnant is sometimes very small. It was so small in the days of Elijah as to cause that man of mind and nerve, the prophet of fire, to utter these words: "Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, and digged down Thy altars; and *I am left alone*, and they seek my life."

"*A few names.*" One name by which the children of God are distinguished is

### ELECT.

From whence is this name derived? All the names given to the members of the body of Christ are derived from their great and glorious Head. If I have a name in connection with my profession of religion which is not derived from a vital and experimental relationship to Christ my Head, the sooner I am rid of the name the better. When I found myself honoured with the name ELECT, I searched God's Book, and, searching it by the grace and guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, I was led to Isaiah xlii. 1: "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; MINE ELECT, in whom My soul delighteth." It was this that caused Dr. Watts to write so sweetly in that blessed hymn of his—

"Jesus, we bless Thy Father's name;  
Thy God and ours are both the same;  
What heavenly blessings from His throne  
Flow down to sinners through His Son!  
'Christ be MY FIRST ELECT,' He said;  
Then chose our souls in Christ, our Head,  
Before He gave the mountains birth,  
Or laid foundations for the earth."

But God has another blessed and distinguishing name for His children,

### "MY REDEEMED."

"Eternal, free, electing grace  
Redemption's bound'ry sets;  
And those whom Jesus died to save,  
The Spirit ne'er forgets."

God's election of His people in Christ is revealed in their redemption by Christ. Redemption. What is it? Not a mere purchase. It is not simply buying; but a buying back. It is restoration by price and by power of property to the original Proprietor. The great Redeemer, who owned the Church as the gift of the Father before the worlds were framed, saw that Church in time amid the ruins of the fall as the bond-slave of Satan. According to His Father's decree, and His own engagement and promise, He, in the fulness of His love, came to the very spot of His Church's captivity, paid the price of her redemption, His own precious blood and His forfeited life, by which she is eternally freed from Satan's thrall and dominion. But the

elect, by nature, are dead in trespasses and sins, and bound in Satan's wiles. Here we have the revelation of redemption by power. In the time appointed of the Father, the blessed Spirit brings to light the jewels of election love. He knows the spot where they lie in sin, disgrace, and death. He comes as the Spirit of the Redeemer, breaks their chains, and brings them into living association with their glorious Lord. Redemption is the line of demarcation between the children of God and the children of the devil. I say this because Satan's religious brood, in these days of degeneracy and decay, are attempting, by strenuous efforts, to obliterate that line. They are sounding out on every hand that lying figment of their father, *general redemption*, which really means *universal damnation*. Errors the most deadly are introduced to notice in the most subtle and specious manner, and in the most unlikely places: in hymn-books, sermons full of the word Jesus, and preachers the most *pious*, precise, and punctilious. There are hymn-books in which you will find some of the most blessed productions of the sweet singers in God's Israel, and by their side are some of the most filthy, lying, and erroneous effusions of the ministers of Satan. These are the more dangerous to the peace and comfort of the children of God through their association with the name of Jesus, and blessed are they who have not defiled their garments with them. But this is the glorious truth which my soul loves to proclaim—Particular and personal redemption by price and by power for all those interested in the everlasting covenant of JEHOVAH'S grace, and in His decree of eternal and unconditional election. Here I pass on to notice other precious names given by God to His Church and people in Christ Jesus. It is a blessed privilege for me to know that I am one of the elect of God, one of the redeemed of the Lord; but how much more blessed it is for Him to teach me that which He has declared in Isaiah lvi. 5: "Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons or of daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." Would you like a view of this name? Of course you would.

Look at it.

#### HEPHZIBAH.

Turn to Isa. lxii. 4: "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah." What is that? "*My delight is in her.*" It is expressive of JEHOVAH'S delight in His Church and people, in every individual member of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the contemplation of His delight we are lost in wonder, love, and praise. It is delight unutterable and ineffable, which can never be fathomed by mortal, or fully comprehended by that spiritual knowledge which He bestows upon His own. You have a hint of this in that wonderful declaration in Eph. iii. 19: "And to know the love of Christ

which passeth knowledge." We know it, yet our knowledge is but faint. We enjoy it, and yet we are brought to confess that we know little or nothing about it. God's delight in His Church and people is the same that He had in His Son when He set Him up in the counsels of old as the One Object in which He would be everlastingly glorified. Dr. Hawker knew a little of this when he sang,

" Oh, what love the Father bore us !  
Oh, how precious in His sight !  
When He gave His Church to Jesus,  
Jesus, His whole soul's delight."

The place which the Church has in the affections of her God is blessedly set forth in that precious verse,

" So dear, so very dear to God,  
Dearer I cannot be ;  
The love wherewith He loves the Son  
Such is His love to me."

### BEULAH,

which means *married*, is another name found here. It indicates the mutual love existing between Christ and His bride. See how this is blessedly described in verse 5: "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." I have tried to enumerate a few names, Elect, Redeemed, Hephzibah, Beulah, which distinguish a people in eternal and undisturbed union with a covenant God in Christ. We have noticed what is meant by *the names*, and will now dwell upon the words,

"A few." In all ages of the world the people of God have been comparatively few in number. We are sometimes led to say when a spirit of loneliness steals over us, Surely, there never was a day when the people of God were so few and error so rife. If we think a little, and consult the experience of God's children in all ages, we shall find the same complaint flowing from the exercised hearts of those whom He has separated from the corrupt mass surrounding them, and brought into living and loving communion with Himself. One in Sodom. Lonely Lot whose righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the filthy deeds of the Sodomites. Only eight persons in the days of Noah whom God would save from the universal destruction. Those were a few indeed in comparison to the corrupt mass of mankind surrounding them. David oftentimes confessed his loneliness. So few did he see around him who were interested in spiritual realities that his soul cried out to his God, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Psa. cxlii. 4). At another time he was so overwhelmed with the sight of abounding corruption as to exclaim, "Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children

of men." Though living in the midst of Israel, yet he knew the lack of communion with the saints, and was shut up to commune in secret with his God. Here I would have you notice that the close of every dispensation has been characterised by error and idolatry. At the close of the antediluvian age, the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the prophetic dispensations, there was a scarcity of truth, and a paucity of numbers in the assemblies of the saints. Turn to Mal. iii. 16, 17, where you have a description of God's remnant in the midst of declension and darkness, and we may well thank God for so gracious a declaration. "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another; and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels:" or, as you read in the margin, "*My special treasure.*" Come to the New Testament and mark well the Saviour's declaration in Matt. vii. 14: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Few in comparison to the many who walk the broad road to destruction. Look now at Matt. xx. 16, at the close of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, which labourers, irrespective of the time they had laboured, received the same pay, "Every man a penny." Jesus said, "Many be called, but few chosen." This reminds me of that declaration in Isa. xli. 13, 14. This is a chapter which has been made most precious to me. "For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel;" or, according to the margin, "*ye few men of Israel.*" "I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." A motley crowd, yet few in comparison to the vast mass on every hand. When Jesus came upon earth, few received Him. Search the records of the travels of God's sent servants and you will see that into whatsoever country or city they entered, only a few were found who bowed to the sovereignty of JEHOVAH'S grace, or gloried in "A full Christ for empty sinners." But mark! "A few names even in Sardis." That word *even* denotes Sardis to have been a city of profligacy and voluptuousness. And so it was; but even here, by the sovereign grace of God, Christ had a few whose garments were not defiled.

"*Their garments.*" What are we to understand by their garments? A garment is a covering to hide one's shame and nakedness. Sin strips. Salvation covers. Look through the Book and you find mention of many of divers garments or coverings. Turn to Isaiah xxviii. 20, where you read of a covering narrower than a man can wrap himself in it. In chap. lix. 6, we read God's declaration concerning the productions of those who were pleased with themselves. "Their webs shall not

become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity." Now turn to chap. lxiv. 6, where the remnant, in the experience of the truth of chap. lix., cry out, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." You notice that word "*righteousnesses*" is in the plural. Why is this? To show that the prophet and his companions meant their very best righteousness, their most holy performances, their most sacred doings. Yes, this is all fact, for the most hallowed service that we can render as springing from ourselves, is but filthy and polluted in the sight of God. Now turn to Ezekiel xvi. 8. Here God seeks, finds, and saves His people. He sees His Church in its natural state and condition, and says, "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness." God in His Word teaches us that in our sinful and unregenerate state, we stand naked before Him; but as saved in Christ and quickened by the Holy Ghost, we stand clothed and accepted of Him. What is the clothing which God provides for His people? Turn to Rev. vii. 9: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, *clothed with white robes*, and palms in their hands." Come to chap. xix. 8 and 14: "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, *clothed in fine linen, white and clean*." The fine linen, the righteousness of saints, in which they stand clothed and accepted before God, is the righteousness of Christ. The righteousness of God is the righteousness of the law, and the righteousness of the law is the righteousness of faith. This is the faith of God and the faith of God's elect which apprehends and enjoys in Christ a righteousness in which he stands for ever just. It is a mercy to know that into whatever depths of sin we may be plunged, to whatever lengths of disobedience we may wander, or to whatever heights of presumption we may soar, we can never soil or sully that pure white robe of everlasting and perfect righteousness provided for us in the person, love, blood, and obedience of our Lord and Saviour.

What are we to understand by the expression, "*which have not defiled their garments*?" If you will turn to 1 Peter v. 5, you will read the new covenant command, "Be clothed with humility." Not only clothed and justified in the robe of Christ's righteousness, but giving evidence of this by the possession of the spirit of Christ. Clothed with humility we are found in oneness of spirit at the feet of Him who humbled Himself. Yet often we grieve because, through association with the world, through yielding to the meek and mild opponents of our sove-



reign Lord JEHOVAH-JESUS, through parleying with those who know Him not, and who tone down His truth to truckle with Satan's speckled brood, we see poor sinners soiled, sullied, and sorrowing, and longing for the all-cleansing fountain of a Saviour's blood. Yet, blessed be God, there are a few names *even now* who have not defiled their garments. True humility characterises them.

Look at that trenchant Jude brings before us in the 23rd verse of his short epistle : "*Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*" Mark you, this is not a garment wholly stained, but merely spotted with the flesh. It is a real luxury to meet with a man in the midst of abounding corruption, error, and idolatry, whose ministerial garment is unspotted by the flesh. Even now there are some, but these *very few indeed*, who stand up to declare "all the counsel of God" without taking the counsel of men. With them, God is everything and the sinner nothing ; God is full of grace and compassion for empty, hell-deserving sinners ; God is All in all in the work of salvation, from His decree of election to the consummation of that decree in the glorification of every elect vessel of mercy. Is it not our mercy to know, that within the walls of Grove Chapel, God's glorious truth is proclaimed, His sovereign decrees are sounded forth ? Here, there is no hawking of linsey-wolsey garments, no yoking the ox and the ass together, no sowing with mingled seed, a little of free-grace and a little of free-will. Here we seek not the world's favour, patronage, or support. We desire to have nothing whatever to do with those whose teachings and creed cast reflections upon the covenant God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who holds that the Father elected some whom the Son fails to save and the Spirit cannot reach ! Arminianism can do nothing else but bolster up a disappointed God, a defeated Christ, and a disgraced Holy Ghost. No disappointed God here ! No defeated Christ in this pulpit ! No disgraced Holy Ghost known among us. Oh, no ! We rejoice in the knowledge of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in council before the worlds were framed ; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the glorious work of the Church's redemption ; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the work of regeneration. See ! "Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. ix. 14). "Through Christ we have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). To be kept with a single eye to God's glory, to be kept firmly standing on new covenant ground, to be kept in communion and association with a sovereign God in Christ by the indwelling of the blessed Spirit, is truly a miracle of grace in these days of compromise and declension. We now come to consider,

II.—THE REWARD—"And they shall walk with Me in white." Amos asks the question, "Can two walk together except they be agreed ?" (chap. iii. 3). They cannot, I think ; I could not

walk half a dozen yards in agreement with any free-will walker. This may be owing to what a lady in Mallow, Ireland, styles my "hot temper." Well, let it be so. Compromise with error I hate, coquetting with free-will traitors I disdain. With me, it is either God's free-grace, or man's free-will. Which of the two has the pre-eminence with us? God's free-grace and no admixture will do for me. Now, if two are walking together, there must be agreement. Blessed be the name of our God, the agreement wrought between Himself and us is all His own work, according to His good pleasure in Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Ghost in us. Reconciliation is God's work in elect man, not man's work with God. See Col. i. 21: "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." That blessed word *reconcile* in every portion of God's Word, has reference to His people, and not to Himself. We know nothing of a reconciled God, but we do know something of a reconciled people to an ever-loving and compassionate God. It was His to break down all enmity and to bring His whole Church together in blessed unity of spirit and oneness of heart in Himself. Now, walking together indicates life and activity as well as agreement and hallowed intimacy. A loving Saviour delights in making Himself intimate with the people of His Father's choice. He has many ways of doing so. I love to be found in company with the two doubters who walked together from Jerusalem to Emmaus, even though I must be called a fool. As Jesus walked and talked with them, He said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," and He oftentimes says to me, "O fool, and slow of heart to believe." He says quite right. He compliments me not on the strength of my faith, neither does He pat me on the head because of my trust in Him. Sometimes I do experience how graciously He draws near to me, but my eyes are holden that I cannot see Him. He draws out my spirit to Him in confessions of sin, sorrow, and suffering. He opens to me the treasures of His gracious goodness, redeeming love, and resurrection-power. He reveals Himself, and almost immediately vanishes out of my sight. "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" And so say we. In all this we feel spiritual intimacy and heart nearness. But Jesus says, they shall not only walk with Him, but it shall be

"*In white.*" What does this denote? Innocence, purity, and perfection. The Church in her bridal attire ever appears in the eyes of her Bridegroom, innocent, pure, perfect.

"Betroth'd in love ere time began,  
His blood-bought bride with Jesus see;  
Made by eternal union ONE,  
Who was, and is, and is to be.

Thus in His eyes she ever stood  
 From wrinkle and from blemish free ;  
 Loved with the dateless love of God,  
 And blessed by the Great Sacred Three."

White garments also indicate true nobility and acceptance at court. You see this in the case of Mordecai, in Esther viii. 15: "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king *in royal apparel of blue and white*, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen." As assuredly as a child of God has been brought into experimental oneness with a precious Christ, he will stand before his God as a noble indeed among Heaven's aristocracy. White raiment proclaimed the wearer to be a conqueror, so all the white-robed throng before the throne are more than conquerors through him that loved them.

III.—THE REASON—"For they are worthy." All the worthiness we possess, or shall possess, is in Christ our Surety, Saviour, Husband, and Head. But I believe the worthiness of the text has reference to the experience and endurance of the living child of God. One illustration must suffice. In Judges vii. 2—7, we read when Gideon called his army together it numbered two-and-thirty thousand men. When it was weeded of those who were fearful and afraid, "there remained ten thousand." But God would have Gideon bring those down to the water, and only those who lapped the water like a dog, and bowed down upon their knees to drink, were accounted worthy to war against the enemies of Israel. So the worthiness of God's walkers and warriors is of God from first to last. Consult at your leisure Matt. x. 11, with Luke xx. 35, and xxi. 36: "Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." Why worthy? Because the graces which were Divinely communicated were Divinely tested. See! an arch is built, and its strength lies in its weakest point. Before it is declared fit for general use, it must be tested. Heavy weights are brought to bear upon it—it stands the test. Is that arch stronger after the testing than it was before? Not a whit. But the testing and the endurance proclaimed its value and its worth. So it is with the work of God in the hearts of His people. It is perfect, yet it shall be tested again and again. Those who experience this testing, shall be declared worthy to walk with Christ in white, and shall confess that all their worthiness flows from their gracious Redeemer, according to the sovereign decree of the Father, by the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit.

May it be yours and mine to know, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that we are JEHOVAH'S separated ones, kept by His power "through faith, ready to be revealed in the last time."

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## DIVINE CERTAINTIES PROCLAIMED TO PERISHING OUTCASTS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
MARCH 16TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem."—Isaiah xxvii. 13.

CERTAINTY is stamped upon every declaration of JEHOVAH'S Word. Certainty is clearly revealed in every precious promise shining in the portion which I have read for our meditation this morning. I love to deal with certainties; with clear and transparent things; with solid and substantial realities. There is no satisfaction experienced in my heart when doubt, suspicion, or hesitancy lurk therein. In Divine certainties I find everything for my comfort and encouragement, to give me a gracious lift out of my doubts, fears, and surmisings, set my feet with firm footing upon the Rock of eternal ages, and order with infallible accuracy my goings in the wilderness. Poor doubting and fearing ones, those who would rather doubt than presume, may be ready to ask, Why are you so certain? Upon what is your confidence grounded? I answer, JEHOVAH'S own Word, in the description of the persons addressed in this blessed portion. These characters and characteristics I find in my own experience. Look at them! "Ready to perish." "Outcasts." Cast off from the sensible realisation of the presence of Him I love. But look at the certainties of the text. In it the truth is not clogged with conditions, but appears in positive declarations, unmistakable assertions, and clear revelations. "And it shall come to pass in that day." It does not say, It may come to pass, or provision has been made for its coming to pass, but, "It shall come to pass." Satan may say Nay, but Jehovah says Yea. "For all the promises of God in Jesus

Christ are Yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. i. 20). A guilty conscience may say Nay; an unbelieving spirit will say Nay. JEHOVAH'S Yea will ever stand good to His people in Christ Jesus. Toplady might well sing,—

"His promise is Yea and Amen,  
And never was forfeited yet."

And, blessed be His name, never will be. "It shall come to pass." No "if, but, perhaps, or peradventure" here. "In that day." A certain time. "The great trumpet *shall be blown*." Certainty again. "And *they shall come*." Certainty is seen in every declaration. And they "*shall worship the LORD*." It is not, they may worship the LORD, or they ought to worship Him, but "*they shall*." Where? "In the holy mount at Jerusalem." The persons, periods, performances, privileges, and place all irrevocably fixed by our covenant God.

It is ours for a short time to consider—

I.—THE CERTAIN SOUND—"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown."

II.—THE CERTAIN CHARACTERS—The "ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt."

III.—THE CERTAIN EFFECTS—"And they shall come, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem."

I.—THE CERTAIN SOUND—"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown." Notice the time mentioned, "*in that day*." What day is this? A few Sundays ago I endeavoured to set before you the meaning of this expression as it appears frequently in the major and minor prophets—"That day." "The day of the Lord" has reference to His visitations in grace and judgment, when the creature is humbled, and JEHOVAH is All in all. It is the day when God is everything, and the sinner in himself is nothing at all. It is the day of JEHOVAH-JESUS' power, according to Psalm cx. 3, where JEHOVAH the Father, speaking to JEHOVAH the Son as the Governor, Ruler, and King of His people, says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." A people willing to be saved according to God's plan. A people willing to bear the burdens their Governor places upon them. A people willing to endure the sufferings which infinite wisdom has designed for them. A people willing to pass through much tribulation for the sake of their kind and gracious Master. A people willing to pass through pain or pleasure according to the Father's predestinating and never-failing providence, whether they be left to sigh at mercy's door, or privileged to sit at the banquet of love feasting upon the rich provisions of His grace; whether they be longing for glimpses of His glory, or lost in the fulness of His covenant favour. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." Not only the day of atonement, but the day of resurrection-power and glory. This

portion refers to our Lord's ascension, when He passed into the heavens and became Head over all things to His Church and people. It means also the time appointed of the Father when the ready-to-perish ones, and the outcasts, should be visited with His salvation. At that very time, on that very day, "the great trumpet shall be blown." Notice the unerring certainty in act and time. "And it shall come to pass in that day." JEHOVAH has so planned and designed as to admit of no failure or miscarriage in connection with any of His arrangements. When the time of love arrives, when the day of grace and power dawns upon any elect vessel of mercy, His sweet communications of love must be made, and the silvery notes from Zion's trumpet must be heard. We will now notice the words,—

"*The great trumpet shall be blown.*" In every portion of God's Word where He employs metaphors, similitudes, and illustrations, mysterious meanings lie beneath them; but we are sure to find other portions which fully explain them. Our text, no doubt, is an allusion to Numbers x. 1—10, where we have described the material, make, and use of the silver trumpets. "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps." Why two trumpets? God had a reason for commanding Moses to make two. He never does anything without a reason, and it is our mercy to know that He never goes out of Himself for a reason. "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?" (Isaiah xl. 14). JEHOVAH takes counsel with none. The Divine Three took counsel with each other in covenant before the worlds were framed. They took counsel in the creation of man, according to Gen. i. 26: "And God said, Let Us make man." The Divine Three went not beyond the bounds of Deity for counsel. Here JEHOVAH says to Moses, "Make thee two trumpets of silver." Why two? Because "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established" (Matt. xviii. 16). So the two silver trumpets were types of the testimonies of God's witnesses who witness, not by their own breath, but by the breath of God, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. In this dispensation of grace, God's testimony is not by *man*, but by *men* who are witnesses of the grace, glory, power, and majesty of Christ as He is revealed in the waiting and wanting hearts of His people. But look at the material and the make of these trumpets:—

"Of a whole piece shalt thou make them." No harsh bray of sounding brass; but clear, sweet notes of God's silver. "*Of a whole piece.*" What does this signify? That the testimony which goes forth from God's sent messengers is all of a piece.

In their proclamation of the sovereign grace of God no discordant notes are heard. In the precious testimony going forth from Zion's trumpeters the joyful sound of salvation all of grace from first to last is anxiously welcomed by those who are feelingly ready to perish and cast out from Zion and from God. All of a piece is the testimony in Grove Chapel. I ask—but not egotistically—I ask, in the presence of Him with whom I have to do, and to whom I am frequently called to render an account, as one who watches over the souls of Zion's pilgrims, Is my testimony all of a piece? Well, I thank God, and that with a good conscience, I can look Him in the face and say, that from the first time my mouth was opened here to the present day, the testimony has been ever the same;—man nothing—nay, in himself, worse than nothing—and God everything in the salvation, security, and solace of His children, and in the sympathy which flows from the heart of the once sorrowing, troubled, and tempted Christ. All of a piece! The glorious Gospel of the blessed God is not sounded forth clogged with conditions. It knows nothing of a salvation partly of God and partly of man—man to do something which is called "*his part*," and then God will meet him. Such a declaration would only be for the discomfiture of the children of God and the triumph of Satan's designs against them. But, blessed be God, such a God-dishonouring testimony we know not, for ours, from first to last, is all of grace—free, sovereign, uninfluenced, immutable, and invincible. But look at the use of the trumpets.

"That thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly." This reminds us of "the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven" (Heb. xii. 22—24). You may rest assured of this, nothing will attract and allure the members of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ who know their natural vileness and the preciousness of their Head, but the clear sound of the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace. It is the power of this Gospel which makes them a worshipping, wandering, and warring people. God's people are a worshipping people, but their worshipping does not exempt them from wandering. Some of you know this, as sure as you are here to-day worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, enjoying sweet rest through the revealing of His covenant purposes and gracious performances by the indwelling of His blessed Spirit, the anxious, dread to-morrow stares you in the face. Yes, you know that to-morrow you must wander hither and thither, whither you would not. You know, too, that as assuredly as you have been summoned to worship by the sound of the Gospel trumpet, with its sweet and silvery strains of heavenly music, so you have been called to warfare, and to war again you must go. Let a man with that faithful and uncompromising spirit with which God endows some of His own sent ministers, declare unflinchingly the eternal and unconditional salvation of

the elect in Christ Jesus, refute error, and rebuke heretics, he will be sure to meet with trimmers and temporizers who pander to hypocrisy and plead for the murderers of God's fair truth, saying, "We ought to pity and pray for them. We ought to deal gently with them." What! Deal gently with error, lies, and hypocrisy? Never! If it is mine to pluck up an Arminian or Popish nettle, I must grasp it firmly or it will sting me. Blessed be God, it is mine to stand up in His name and fear for the comfort and consolation of His tried and tempted children; it is mine to sound an alarm in Zion when enemies and traitors are lurking about; it is mine in the testimony of His truth to rebuke those who are not sound in the faith, while the weaklings in faith are encouraged and comforted. The blessing of the free-grace trumpets is "for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps." Now notice

*The times* when the trumpets shall be blown. Turn to Numbers xxix. 1: "And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you." This feast of trumpets was at the commencement of the civil year. In the Jewish code of laws there were the civil and ecclesiastical years, and here we read the trumpets were blown at the commencement of the civil year. This teaches me that which is oftentimes denied by some who are sound in the letter of truth—who own and acknowledge a sovereign God in spiritual things, but who ignore Him altogether in providential matters. If JEHOVAH has nothing to do with my providential affairs, He has nothing at all to do with me. But He has to do with my providential matters.

"He manages my mean affairs."

I like that precious translation of Psal. lvii. 2: "I will cry unto God Most High, unto God the Transactor of my affairs." He knows how many crosses will be salutary for me, and how many mercies I shall prize. He has wisely ordered the number of disappointments I must experience, and the amount of provision which shall grace my table. He has arranged with infallible accuracy the number of pounds I shall receive in the year, and the number of pennies I shall possess in a day. If He gives me hundreds this year and withholds them the next, it is all in accordance with His covenant arrangements. He is "too wise to err, and too good to be unkind." Our God can never make a mistake. Acknowledging a God of providence, we love to notice the birthdays of those who are near and dear to us. I love to notice, with the love and affection of my heart, the day on which God sent into the world any eternally-loved and elect vessel of mercy; but simply to notice one day in the year would be cold comfort to such an one. Our God has made provision for the monthly and daily acknowledgment of His gracious dealings



with us. See Numbers x. 10: "Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God." At the beginning of months, as well as the beginning of years, ay, and in the day of gladness and in the solemn days. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. iii. 6). Whatever our days may be, glad or solemn, joyful or sorrowful, may it be ours to acknowledge JEHOVAH as our covenant God and Father in the Son of His love. When He comes down to me in loving correction, causing me to grieve and sigh, may I acknowledge Him there. When He visits me in pity and lovingkindness, and sweetly whispers to my heart, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so I pity thee, for I know that thou fearest Me," then I do acknowledge Him. When He blesses me with the luxuries of His providence, I would acknowledge Him. When He blesses me with the want of them, I would acknowledge Him in the want. So at the commencement of the year, of the month, of the day, and, may I not say, of the hour, may I acknowledge a gracious covenant God who reveals Himself in the silvery tones of Gospel music, sounded from the trumpets of His own designing, which are all of a piece.

But He tells us who were to blow the trumpets. "And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations." Aaron and his sons, the priests, were lively types of Christ and His worshipping people. As you notice the types in the first seven chapters of Leviticus, you will see in the offerings of God's appointing, Aaron and his sons compassing the altar and feasting upon the portion assigned to them by God. "For the wave breast and the heave shoulder have I taken of the children of Israel from off the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest, and unto his sons by a statute for ever from among the children of Israel." You have a hint of this in the 10th verse of the chapter before us (Numbers x.): "Ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings." In the burnt offering I see a whole Christ accepted for me and I accepted in Him. It is not Christ and my experience, not that; for, blessed be His holy name, my acceptance is not measured by my experience, yet I love to know that my experience reaches to the standard of God's appointment—His Christ. As the free-grace trumpet sounds over my peace-offering, my soul delights to feed upon the *breast* of everlasting love, and upon the *shoulder* of irresistible power. Whatever may be my state or condition, whether worshipping before the throne, wandering in the wilderness, or warring with

enemies external and internal, He has declared that the great trumpet proclaiming salvation, deliverance, and victory, shall be sounded in my ears. You will find mention of the blowing of the trumpet in Lev. xxv. 9: "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land." The sound of this trumpet proclaimed liberty to the captive, and the restoration of forfeited inheritances to their original owners. This reminds us of the precious testimony in Psalm lxxxix. 15: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Thy countenance." In all this institution we have prefigured the glorious truths of the Gospel of the grace of God. But here I would have you notice one important fact: think about it, ponder over it, and may God lead you to a blessed solution of the seeming difficulty. In this 25th of Leviticus you read of the institution of the year of jubilee, but you find not a single mention of the observance of it throughout the whole history of ancient Israel. What does this speak to you and me? That it has to do especially with God's spiritual Israel, His own elect throughout all time, and that it shall be blessedly experienced in the hearts of His people by the grace and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit.

II.—THE CERTAIN CHARACTERS—The "ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt." These words inspired my heart with a little confidence and comfort this morning, giving me to experience a certainty in the things of God. It is blessed and most precious when we are led by the Holy Ghost into the temple of eternal truth, and are enabled, by grace preventing, following, and surrounding us, to claim as our own the bounties, benefits, and blessings which abound to favoured sinners by Jesus Christ. Now if you had a Gospel not all of a piece, there would be no possibility of your claiming with confidence the blessings of salvation or the enjoyment of them. If you delighted not in a testimony at one with itself, the promise and commands which went forth from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ would be neither acceptable nor savoury to you. If I were so left to myself as to say that all the blessings of salvation were for believers, where would you be? It may be that some of you have this morning been doubting the reality of the truths of God's written Word in respect to yourselves, or, like me, you may have been calling into question the truth of Divine inspiration. As I have read of the terrible judgments of JEHOVAH upon His enemies, and upon all out of the Son of His love, my wretched nature has quivered with a spirit of infidelity, while I have called into question His love, mercy, and compassion. Some of you may think I am not so bad as all that. Ah, my dear friends, it is all true; and more than this, I am full of doubting, fearing,

questioning, unbelief, and when in providence He crosses my poor proud nature, it will question His sovereign right to do with me as He thinks fit and proper, either in pain or pleasure. But look at the characters—“*Ready to perish.*” Have we any ready-to-perish ones here, who are trembling and anxiously waiting for that succour and sympathy which Zion’s Deliverer alone can give? These characters we have described in many portions of God’s most Holy Word. Turn with me to Isa. li. 12—14: “I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass: and forgettest the LORD thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth: and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?” Who is this oppressor? It is Satan inciting sinful man against us. It is Satan working upon our carnal and rebellious nature. It is Satan injecting his filthy posion, his unbelieving and infidel thoughts into my mind, and fathering them upon me, saying, “If thou wast a child of God, how can it be that such corruption and depravity surge and seethe in thee? If God is all holiness and purity, and hates to look upon sin and iniquity, how can a sinful wretch like thee expect to find favour with Him? Rather look for His frown.” Thus Satan will incite doubt, dread, and despair, until he is put to flight by the Spirit of the Lord revealing atoning blood, justifying righteousness, all-prevalent intercession, and demanding in tones of authority and sovereign power, “Where is the fury of the oppressor?”

“*Ready to perish.*” These are they who linger amid the dark and gloomy shades of Sinai, and, like Moses, exceedingly fear and quake as the terrible declarations and denunciations of God’s holy law peal forth. As the curse and condemnation attendant upon every breach of that law are made known, the soul trembles before God, expecting eternal death. We were *ready to perish* when God declared to our trembling souls, “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” “*Ready to perish*” when He thundered into our startled ears, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” On old covenant ground, on the dark slopes of Sinai, in my soul’s feelings, I am “*ready to perish*,” and fear lest I may hear the voice of my Judge saying unto me, “Depart, thou cursed one, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” The quickened child of God is not only “*ready to perish*” upon the ground of law, but also after deliverance therefrom, as he is brought to realize the power of indwelling sin and the workings of internal corruptions. You will see this in the apostle’s argument in the 7th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, but which is rarely noticed. The first

part of the chapter treats upon the killing power of the law in the experience of a living soul. The latter part shows that after deliverance from the curse and condemnation has been experienced, the living child is "ready to perish" in its feelings because of the working of sin in its members. Hence the cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). I know what that means, for sometimes I look for holiness, but find impurity; I seek salvation, but I experience sin; I long for the embrace of my God, but I writhe under the hug of the devil; I sigh for the society of the saints, but I am surrounded with evil spirits, and Satanic agencies seek my overthrow; I court the "thoughts of heaven and things Divine," but I am troubled with vain, evil, and foolish thoughts which fill my heart with confusion and dread. I groan for the peace of God which passeth all understanding, but successive temptations and tribulations drive me with an overwhelmed spirit, a desolate heart, and sorrowing soul, to cry, "All these things are against me. I am oppressed: undertake for me." Some may object to this, and say that after the gracious revelation of a covenant God and Father in Christ, the children of God cannot be thus exercised. The answer I give to such is, your experience differs vastly to that of the living children as described by the unerring pen of inspiration. The tried and tempted people of God are also described as

"Outcasts." Brought into the true knowledge and understanding of myself in the light of infinite purity, in the presence of infinite excellency, in the full blaze of the infinite perfections of my God and Lord, what am I? Not only "ready to perish," but cast out. Brought into the presence of Him who has saved me, and oftentimes has given me sweet intimations of His love and of the affections of His heart, still, I find myself an outcast longing to enjoy the affections of Him I love. But though these may be my feelings, they alter not His affections who loves me with an everlasting love, and has declared for my comfort and encouragement, "I hate putting away" (Mal. ii. 16). Outcast is the state and condition of every elect child of God when He begins His work of grace in it. You see this in that remarkable free-grace chapter, Ezek. xvi. At the fifth verse the Word of JEHOVAH speaking to Israel says, "None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; *but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.*" Mark the time—"In the day that thou wast born!" And was it not so with us when the spirituality of the law was revealed to our anxious hearts? Then 'the commandment came, sin revived, and *we died.*' We felt ourselves to be outcasts from His presence; we found no place at His table, no seat at His feet, no smile from His face, no recognition from His eye, no word of grace from His blessed lips. Outcasts in

feeling, Zion's pilgrims oftentimes are, and that not only during the workings of law, but also amid the leadings of love. He who encouraged himself in the Lord his God, and could say, "I will not fear what flesh can do unto me," was brought to say in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" (1 Sam. xxvii. 1).

"*Outcasts.*" We will look at a few instances recorded of those who were strong in faith. If we could ask them for an exhibition of their faith, they would have none to boast of. See how dear old Job expresses his outcast condition in the 9th and 23rd chapters. There we see him, not dandled upon the knees of eternal affection, nor nestling in the bosom of everlasting love. He says, "I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that Thou wilt not hold me innocent. If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain? If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment." Come to his 23rd chapter, where we hear him complaining in the bitterness of his spirit: "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." Though an outcast in feeling, he was supported by faith: "But He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Come with me to Psalm xliii. 2: "For Thou art the God of my strength; *why dost Thou cast me off?*" In these words we have a confession of faith blended with a complaint of felt distance from God. Look again at Psalm lxxxviii. 14, where you hear a sinner, eternally loved of his God, yet cast out from His presence, "*Lord, why castest Thou off my soul?*" Why hidest Thou Thy face from me?" Come now to Isaiah xlix. 14, where you have the experience of the whole Church of God: "But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Though forsaken and forgotten so far as the feelings and judgment are concerned, yet faith claims relationship—"my Lord." Now see what "my Lord" says: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Come along to Lamentations iii. Jeremiah says, "He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is He turned; He turneth His hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath He made old; He hath broken my bones. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travel. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; He hath made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout, He shutteth out

my prayer." Listen! "And Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace; I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD." Notice verses 44 and 54, "Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, *I am cut off.*" Now turn to Jonah ii. 2: "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardest my voice. For Thou hadst cast me into the depths, in the midst of the seas." Jonah does not mention the act of the mariners who cast him out, he saw nothing but the hand of his God in all this. "The floods compassed me about; all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me. Then I said, *I am cast out of Thy sight*; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple." You may depend upon it, though the child of God be *cast out* feelingly a thousand times a day, yet He cannot help but *look again*. I have thanked God a thousand times for that "look again" of dear old Jonah's. In Psalm lxiii. 1, 2, David, cast out and at a distance from Him whom he truly loved, longed to see His power and His glory, so as he had seen Him in the sanctuary.

"*Outcasts.*" Natural religionists expect to see the *pious*, the punctilious, and the fleshy perfectionist, those who are ever talking of their work for their Lord, accepted by and near to Him; but throughout God's Word we meet with the startling declaration that these are all denounced and discarded by Him. We see also, which is blessedly true, that those who mourn and complain of their felt distance from Him, their outcast state and condition, are the very persons who are near and dear to Him. The demoniac, out of whom Jesus had cast a legion of devils, was found clothed, sitting at His feet, and in his right mind, while those who were considered to be in their right mind besought a precious Christ to depart out of their coasts. The true-born child of God is cast out by his own mother's children, the professing Church. See how this is stated in Isaiah lxvi. 5: "Hear the Word of the LORD, ye that tremble at His Word; Your brethren that hated you, *that cast you out for My name's sake*, said, Let the LORD be glorified." You see how nicely these persecuting pietists can speak. They hate and worry God's spiritual children, and yet cry out, "Let the LORD be glorified. But"—listen ye favoured tremblers—"He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." Blessed privilege to know our oneness of spirit with Hart in those words of his:—

"Lord, pity outcasts vile and base.  
The poor dependents on Thy grace,  
Whom men disturbers call:  
By sinners and by saints withstood,  
For these too bad, for those too good;  
Condemn'd or shunn'd by all.

III.—THE CERTAIN EFFECT—"They shall come, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Blessed be His name, He will bring them with their heart going forth

and bowing before Him in gratitude and praise for His delivering mercy, His preserving grace, His unwearied and unceasing care and concern for them all their lives long. I cannot but worship Him for the gracious lifts with which He has blessed me. But my worshipping is of a heavenly and spiritual nature, requiring none of those accursed "*Aids to Devotion*," provided by designing priests and presumers in the shape of pretty books and pretty symbols. No such rubbish as these; but thoroughly weaned from outward things, I see that the means of grace are all in the hands of the Great King-Priest, the Minister of the sanctuary, the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. In that spiritual temple, Christ is the Preacher, declaring the Father's name to His worshipping brethren (John. xvii. 26). Christ is the Singer, leading the praises of His redeemed Church (Heb. ii. 12). Christ is the Conductor of the Liturgies of His living people, for "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." As He warms their heart with His love, and enlightens their understanding with His truth, they go forth in the dances of them that make merry—their hearts dancing with joy and gratitude for His marvellous mercy manifested to them.

But where is the place of worship? The Jew sighs for Jerusalem. The Samaritan pointed to Gerizim. Paul, by the Holy Ghost, leads our minds to Jerusalem above, which is free, and the mother of all the elect of God (Gal. iv. 26). I love those words "Come" and "Worship." Turn to Heb. xii. 22—24: "But ye are *come* unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling; that speaketh better things than that of Abel." "The great trumpet shall be blown." In the proclamation of Gospel grace the command of God goes forth: "Come unto Me, all ye ready to perish and outcasts who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In His loving arms they shall rest in undisturbed security amid the roar of devils and the peals of thunder from Sinai's dark mount. When the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and all earthly things shall be dissolved, then those who have been led by rich and magnanimous grace to lay their will at the feet of Jesus, to find their rest in the bosom of Jesus, and have been carried in His gracious arms to the home and to the heart of the Father, shall stand undismayed, and sing their own love song: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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“A VINEYARD OF RED WINE.”

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
MARCH 23RD, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

“I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”—Isaiah xxvii. 2, 3.

A TRULY evangelical chapter, and a clear experimental portion of God's Word. Life-giving truth shines forth from Him who is the life and glory of His people. Deep and vital experience is brought up from those unknown sorrows and sufferings endured by the Man of sorrows on the behalf of His people. Judgment and mercy appear interspersed through the whole of the chapter. Judgment upon the enemies of JEHOVAH, and mercy upon His friends. Judgment upon the flesh of the saint, but mercy upon his spirit. Figures and metaphors abound, and underlying them we have blessings couched for the redeemed and regenerate children of God. The chapter begins with a declaration of JEHOVAH-JESUS' supreme power and complete victory over the enemies of His Church. “In that day,” a day of grievous distress to some, but a day of gracious deliverance to others. “In that day the LORD with His sore, and great, and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, even leviathan, that crooked serpent; and He shall slay the dragon that is in the midst of the sea.” Here we have the power and might of Zion's Redeemer set before us. The book of the Revelation is an inspired exposition of this glorious verse, though many can read it but historically, and with an eye to future events. The child of God, as he is led by the Holy Ghost into a spiritual understanding of the mysteries contained therein, sees things which have been, things which are, and things which shall be shortly. Not simply that shall be *hereafter*, according to the common acceptance of that word, which means when we have done



with the world and the flesh and are safe in glory. It is not so, but that shall be shortly in the experience of the saints as the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ is graciously revealed to them. Now the child of God, as led by the Spirit through this precious portion of Divine inspiration, may be startled to read of "a great red dragon in heaven;" but are we to understand that the devil can enter the halls of the glorified? No such thing. Satan can never appear in the courts of the blessed, to frighten, taunt, or tempt its blissful inhabitants. When we read of heaven in the book of Revelation, it has the same meaning which we find in that characteristic expression in the Gospel by Matthew, "*the kingdom of heaven.*" This was likened to a field, and to a net. In the field were wheat and tares. In the net were good and bad fish. The appearance of the great red dragon in heaven indicates the determination of Satan to annoy and torment Christ's Church here upon earth. Turn to Rev. xii., where you read of a woman clothed with the Sun. This is the Church clothed in the beauties and glories of Christ, her Head, yet experiencing the pangs of spiritual labour, and bringing forth fruit to the praise and glory of His name. She is persecuted and chased by Satan, but a place of security is found for her until Michael the Archangel appears. Who is He? He reveals Himself in the question contained in the meaning of His name—"Who is like God?" It is Michael, the Prince of the kings of the earth. It is Michael, the Messiah, God's Christ, God's Anointed. He is our Leader, Commander, and Deliverer. He "and His angels fought against the devil and his angels; and the dragon fought and his angels and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceived the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ." This is the experience of salvation, and strength, and the kingdom which comes to the heart, not with outward show, but by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the resurrection-power of Jesus raising the saints out of, and above, themselves, seating them in the heavenlies with Christ. "For the accuser of the brethren is cast down." Look at the contrast between those two titles of the devil: "The accuser of the brethren," and "The deceiver of the whole world." Where are we? In the deceived world? or, in the accused family? The more the brethren are brought into experimental oneness with the Brother once born for adversity, the fiercer will be the accusations of Satan against them. "For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" in the court of conscience, but not in the court of heaven. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the

word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." No! Death is nothing to those who experience blessed oneness with Him who is the Resurrection and the Life of His redeemed people.

Now the Lord says by His prophet, "In that day the LORD with His sore, and great, and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, even leviathan, that crooked serpent; and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." What are we to understand by the sea? Look at Rev. xxi. 1: "And there was no more sea"—that is, no more sin, sorrow, or suffering; no more temptation, tribulation, or trouble; no more conflict, storm, or tempest; no more casting up of filth, and mire, and dirt; but peace, serenity, and undisturbed repose. In the midst of a sea of temptation, tribulation, and trouble, the Captain of our salvation, with the sword of the Spirit, defeated the devil. You gain a glimpse of this in the account given of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness in Matthew iv. On the ground of the victory there achieved, He could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30). Turn to Heb. ii. 14, 15, where you have an inspired comment upon this portion: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death—that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." When Paul says the devil is destroyed, what does he mean? Does the word *destroyed* mean annihilation? Not for a moment. It is the misunderstanding of such portions as these which has revived in our days the old theories exploded long time ago of the annihilation of the wicked and the death of the devil. Cosy and comfortable professors cry out, "Satan has ceased to be, and we have ceased from conflict. No eternal torments now. The wicked will be annihilated and destroyed." These sentiments arise from the total misconception of those portions of the Scriptures where the word "*destruction*" occurs. Look at Romans xiv. 15: "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." This cannot mean the destruction, or annihilation, of one of the Lord's redeemed. What does it mean? It means, Destroy not his peace, his joy, his comfort. Prejudice not his experimental interest in Christ's death and resurrection. We read also of the destruction of the old world by water (2 Peter iii. 6). Did the waters of the deluge destroy or annihilate the earth? No. And when the grand finale comes, "all these things shall be dissolved" and burnt up. I do not believe this means the annihilation of this earth of ours. Yet the more I look at the end of time, the more I am lost in mystery. What this earth will be after the grand conflagration, I know not. It may be God's intention to purify by fire this earth, which was honoured as the birthplace and human abode of His dear Son, and make

it the future abode of bliss and blessedness for His redeemed ones. But of this I really know not. He has told me that my heaven of heavens is His gracious and glorious presence wherever that may be. I have alluded to these portions of God's blessed Book to show that the word "*destruction*" does not mean annihilation. The simple meaning of Hebrews ii. 14 is that Satan, in his designs against the Church and people of God, should be rendered ineffectual by the death of Christ. In slaying the dragon's power, in bruising the serpent's head, in making an end of sin, the redemption of God's vineyard was finished. "In that day," when this glorious truth is revealed to an enlightened understanding, when it is brought home by the sovereign power of the Holy Ghost to the heart, when you are brought to the experimental realization of the defeat of Satan in all his designs against you, when you are led into the sweet experience of all your sin for ever put away by the atoning death of Zion's Surety and Deliverer, when you are privileged to see death disarmed in the death of Jesus, when you are favoured to know that hell can have no terrors for you, "In that day sing ye unto her." You have the mode and manner set before you in Rev. xv. 3, 4: "And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest." This singing is responsive or alternative. A base and fleshly imitation of this you will hear from surpliced choirs in the Establishment, where little boys arrayed in white respond to each other's singing, while they know not what they sing. But the singing of our text is from heart to heart. It is spirit singing to spirit. It is the heart going forth in blessed and hallowed communion with others in association with itself. It is that reciprocal rejoicing known only by those who are taught by the Spirit to say, "I believe in the communion of saints." It is the enjoyment of that expressed in 1 John i. 3: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." It is that which you find sweetly described in the preface to John xv.—"*The consolation and mutual love between Christ and His members.*" In the enjoyment of this mutual love by the members of the one body, with the experience of eternal redemption accomplished for them in the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, they cannot be restrained from singing. Several times I have endeavoured to set before you the fact, that in all the songs recorded in God's blessed Word with the exception of the Song of Solomon, there is exultation over enemies defeated by the King and Deliverer of Zion. So it is in the song before us, yet here we find something akin to the Song of Songs. It is our privilege

now for a little while to look at the song in its various subjects:—

I.—THE LORD'S POSSESSION—"A vineyard of red wine."

II.—THE LORD'S PROTECTING CARE—"I the LORD do keep it; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

III.—THE LORD'S SUPPORTING CARE—"I will water it every moment."

I.—THE LORD'S POSSESSION—"A vineyard of red wine." What is a vineyard? It is a plot of ground selected and separated from all around for the cultivation of the vine and for the production of wine. Not simply for the production of unfermented wine, but for the production of that very wine of which we read in Prov. xxiii. 31: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright"—that is, when its begins its intoxicating effects; for it is then that wine "moves itself aright," and gives "its colour in the cup." God has declared again and again that every creature of His hand, brought forth by His infinite wisdom and matchless skill is for *use*, and not for *abuse*. Paul, writing to Timothy in his 1st epistle iv. 4, 5, says: "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." Sanctified by the eternal, incarnate, and living Word of God, who has prayed for His people, and ever lives to make intercession for them. The intercession of Christ prevails when my polluted breath recoils upon me. But I said a vineyard is a selected spot. This leads our minds at once to the Church and people of God. It takes us back through time to that eternity when time existed not. Time is but a parenthesis, and the period will arrive when time shall be no longer. Ere time was, God, in the riches of His grace and the fulness of His mercy, for the display of His sovereign love, boundless wisdom, and irresistible power, selected to Himself a people in whom, and by whom, He would be everlastingly glorified. These He handed over to the safe keeping of the Son of His love, as we read in John xvii. 6: "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me." In Christ they were fenced about by the sovereign decree of election, to be redeemed in the fulness of time by His most precious blood-shedding. Has not this expression, "Red wine," something to do with God's glorious work of redemption? Here we are led to contemplate the agony and bloody sweat of our adorable Redeemer in Gethsemane's gloomy vale, the scourging and lacerating with cruel thorns in the judgment hall, and His unparalleled sufferings upon Calvary's rugged tree. The vineyard of the Lord was purchased by blood (Acts xx. 28); it is justified by blood (Rom. v. 9); and washed in blood (Revelations i. 5). Elected, selected, redeemed by God, it is also fenced about and defended by Him. It is fenced about with truth, so that all His

children shall be preserved from the snares of error. It is fenced about with omnipotence that all His weaklings may be secured from the power of Satan. It is fenced about by infinite wisdom that Jesus' disciples may be saved from Satan's subtilty and from the world's sophistry. It is fenced about by JEHOVAH Himself, according to that precious testimony in Zech. ii. 5: "For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." Here we see the Church enclosed, surrounded, and defended by the attributes, decrees, and determination of a sovereign, omnipotent God. Turn with me to Isaiah xxvi. 1: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." In the faith and experience of this we may well sing,—

"Glorious things of thee are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God!  
He, whose word cannot be broken,  
Formed thee for His own abode;  
On the Rock of Ages founded,  
What can shake thy sure repose?  
With salvation's walls surrounded,  
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes."

God, the salvation of His people, is their unfailing security. Is this the truth in the experiences of our hearts by the teaching of God the ever-blessed Spirit? Mark you! it is one thing to read this blessed fact in God's Book, but another altogether to have it written in our heart by that glorious Teacher who proceeds from the Father and the Son to lead and guide His elect and redeemed into all truth.

God's vineyard is a separated spot. Set apart from this world's weary wilderness. Look at this truth of separation as it appears all through God's blessed Book. I sometimes come to the conclusion that it is the prevailing truth of Divine inspiration. You see it in creation. After the creation of chaos, light was separated from the darkness. When God's works were fashioned, the land was separated from the water—the living from the dead. You see it again in the declaration of God's Gospel in Gen. iii. 15, where the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent are revealed. Come to the fourth chapter, and here you see two sons of the same parents, who, according to the loving and gentle John, were wider apart from each other than the poles are asunder. Cain, a child of the devil. Abel, a child of God (1 John iii. 10—12). Look at the grand finale of all earthly things as described by the Saviour in Matt. xxv. 34—41. To some He says, "Come, ye blessed." To others He cries, "Depart, ye cursed." God's elected, selected, surrounded, and separated vineyard is for the culture, growth, and beauty of His vine. What is this vine? It is Christ and His members in fruit-bearing oneness. This we see in John xv. 1—3: "I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husband—

man." The peculiarity of this portion in the original is this, we have the definite article both before the word of qualification and the substantive, and reads thus, "*I am the Vine the True.*" There is no mere profession here. No branch, as some will have it, grafted on by profession. Those who surrounded the Saviour when He spake were all of one heart and one mind with Him, as you see in His address to them in John xiv. 1: "Let not your heart be troubled." Many persons. One heart. Christ the Vine and they the branches growing from Him, bearing fruit by Him, and showing forth His praise who had revealed in them the rich and glorious grace of the Father, and His own redeeming love.

"A vineyard of red wine." In Jacob's prophecy concerning his son Judah, he says, "Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes" (Gen. xlix. 11). Here we have red or choice wine. Under this telling metaphor, JEHOVAH sets forth His ineffable love, intense delight, and unspeakable affection for His Church. He speaks of her as the most precious object that can meet His gaze, the choicest, nearest, and dearest to His heart. In Jotham's parable (Judges ix. 13) we find mention of wine cheering the heart of God and man. The fruit of prayer, praise, and righteousness from the vineyard of the Lord is cheering to His heart and refreshing to the heart of His people. The choice wine of the covenant, flowing through the love, blood, and righteousness of Jesus, encourages, strengthens, establishes, and cheers the hearts of God's children who are desponding and cast down; but who are brought by the power of His right hand into experimental union with their great and glorious Head. See how this wine is spoken of in Prov. xxxi. 6: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts." Why wine? Because of its reviving, strengthening, exhilarating power and influence. In wine we see a metaphor unfolding Gospel truth which speaks life, comfort, peace, and joy to the hearts of the tried, tempted, and downcast children of God. What is there so cheering to a quickened, convinced, and devil-hunted sinner as the assurance of redemption accomplished by the precious blood-shedding of Emmanuel, salvation finished in His wounds and death, Satan defeated by His resurrection power, and acceptance and glory secured by His ascension into heaven, appearing there and by His own blood securing His people's everlasting peace? As we are led by the blessed Spirit into the enjoyment of these precious realities, we can sing from adoring hearts,—

"Those dear tokens of His passion  
Still His dazzling body bears :  
Cause of endless exultation  
To His ransomed worshippers ;

With what rapture—  
Gaze they on those glorious scars."

In beholding the once bleeding wounds of their Incarnate God, the whole of the glorified throng before the throne lift up their voice with one accord, and sing, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

"*A vineyard of red wine.*" In the production of wine, the grape must be pressed and squeezed. Christ knew this in Gethsemane and upon Calvary; and you may depend upon it, as assuredly as He suffered, and as the same experience is recorded of His people in His Word, so will it be wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost. As the child of God is brought into fruitful oneness with a once-suffering Saviour, the True Vine, he will receive many a squeeze from Satan, from sinner, and from saint. The hymn-writer describes this well in those precious and pregnant words:—

"From sinner and from saint,  
He meets with many a blow."

The grinding weight of spiritual oppression must pass over him. The wine-press of Divine discipline must be endured, in which persecution, affliction, trial, and temptation from Satan, the world, the Church, ay, and from God Himself. In the accomplishment of JEHOVAH'S purposes of grace, the child of God will know and feel the truth of that Scripture: "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22); and as we are brought to understand our oneness with Christ in suffering and glory, we shall find no room for discontent or murmuring. But some one of you may be ready to say, I am not so highly privileged; my faith is weak, my doubts are many, and my comforts are so few that I fear to presume. Wait, my friend. I did not say that peace and placidity were always mine. I know they are not. What I said was this: as we are brought to understand our oneness with Christ in suffering and glory, we shall find no room for discontent and murmuring. But when we are left to ourselves, to brood over our troubles, trials, and tribulations, to give way to the wretched disquietude of our nature, discontent and murmuring abound, and these are hushed only as the blessed Spirit gives us to know our election of God, our redemption by blood, and our vital and undisturbed union to our great and glorious Head. See how the Church is set before us as a vineyard in Solomon's Song viii. 11, 12: "Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred." A greater than Solomon is here. Solomon's vineyard? It is Jesus' vineyard. A vineyard select and separate, which He claims as His own peculiar pro-

perty. His in the production of the fruit, and in the disposing of the same. It is of His rich mercy that we know when He draws out our hearts in praise and prayer, it is for the comfort, peace, and joy of those members of the one body with whom we are brought into spiritual association.

II.—THE LORD'S PROTECTING CARE—"I the LORD do keep it; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." It is a marvellous mercy for us to be taught that the greater the danger, the greater the security JEHOVAH has provided for His Church and people. See how blessedly this is set before us in *Psa. xvi.* Luther knew and felt this when, upon one occasion, he said: "Let us sing the 46th Psalm, and defy the devil." Look at it: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early," or, "*when the morning appeareth*;" when the Sun of Righteousness arises above the spiritual horizon of Zion's pilgrims. "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Do troubles increase? Do fears multiply? Do temptations thicken? Do we dread perishing by the hand of this Saul or that? Listen to the testimony of JEHOVAH: "I the LORD do keep it." Look at the declaration of a precious Christ concerning His sheep: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand" (*John x. 28*). His people are secure in His everlasting, immutable love. They stand secure upon the settlements of rich, almighty, and uninfluenced grace. Does He speak of His love? It is everlasting love (*Jer. xxxi. 3*). Does He speak of His righteousness? It is everlasting righteousness (*Dan. ix. 24*). Does He speak of His kingdom? It is an everlasting kingdom that can never be moved. Does He speak of life? It is eternal life. Gracious Keeper! Blessed kept ones (*1 Pet. i. 5*). Turn to *Psa. cxxi. 3*: "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel"—His own vineyard, His own elected, selected, separated, and redeemed ones—"shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy Keeper." JEHOVAH, in His Trinity of Persons, "is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." This "going out and coming in" is not simply from my house in the



morning and returning in the evening; but a going out of the sunshine into the shade, from the banqueting-house to the barren heath. See John x. 9: "I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." *Out* as well as *in* there is pasture and preservation. David knew something of this when he cried: "To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary" (Psa. lxxiii. 2). Notice that! David had seen Him; but here he is longing to see Him again. Yet, *in* or *out*, he was graciously kept. Look at those remarkable words in 2 Sam. viii. 6: "And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went." Hunted like a partridge upon the mountains at the hands of Saul, he was preserved by his God. Threatened by the giant Goliath in the valley of Elah, he was preserved by his God. When he deserved a deeper hell than the vilest reprobate in creation, sinning against light, love, grace, mercy, and compassion, in causing Uriah's drunkenness and murder and committing adultery with Bathsheba, he was preserved by his God. Have I a stone to throw at him? Not one: for I am not a particle better if left to myself. But this is the glorious truth which God made known to Jacob and reveals to all His tried and tempted ones sooner or later: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest" (Gen. xxviii. 15). God's keeping is very mysterious and strange to some at times. He promised to keep and deliver Jeremiah; but to the dungeon and to death Jeremiah must go, and for no other reason than that of declaring God's Word faithfully. God preserved David, but into sins most foul David fell. Christ prayed for Peter's safety, but into Satan's sieve Peter must go. The goings out and the comings in of all the saints are in the hands of their gracious Keeper. In coming into this world of sin, we were preserved in Jesus Christ, and in going out to face the solemnities of eternity, we shall be preserved in Him. Were not Christ my Glory-Bearer, you may depend upon it, that this poor frail tabernacle would never be able to bear up under the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" revealed in the person, work, salvation, and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"*I the LORD do keep it.*" From what? From robbers and evil beasts. From blight, canker, and decay. JEHOVAH the Keeper and Cultivator is well acquainted with every point and particular in respect to the tendency of the vine. Let us notice one peculiarity. The vine has a trailing and grovelling tendency. Go into a vinery where the vine has been neglected, and you will see neither order nor beauty—the whole degenerating and tending to trail on the ground. So it is with the children of God when left to themselves. Had I been left to myself, where should I have been this morning? In this spot preaching His glorious truth? No; but I should have

been speaking, thinking, and acting contrary to the gracious will of my covenant God, and seeking my own pleasure amid the haunts of sin, corruption, and death. It has pleased Him to reveal to me the blessed fact that I am part of His elect, separated, redeemed, and preserved vineyard of red wine, and has caused my heart to sing with a grateful understanding,—

"I thirst, but not as once I did,  
The vain delights of earth to share;  
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid  
That I should seek my pleasures there."

Blessed be the name of our heavenly Husbandman, He keeps His vine from its grovelling tendency, and bears it away from earth, supported and upheld by peg after peg of covenant promise. With His own grace He strengthens His vine in every particular branch thereof. He is a glorious Keeper. Round about it He is a wall of fire, over which the wild boar of the wood cannot pass to ravage it. The evil beasts of discontent, infidelity, and unbelief, can never hurt or destroy it. Look at the promise: "*Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.*" Can any one hurt JEHOVAH'S vine? I answer, No! But was it not hurt in Egypt when Pharaoh and his task-masters laid heavy burdens upon the children of Israel? No! for the more they were afflicted and persecuted (*hurt according to our fleshly judgment*), the more they multiplied and grew. So it is now with God's own in the wilderness, separated by discriminating and distinguishing grace, defended by Almighty and irresistible power, preserved by infinite and unerring wisdom, *that truth of God stands true in their experience*, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" (Isa. xi. 9). All that can be done by the assaults and temptations of Satan; all that is accomplished by JEHOVAH in His judgments on the flesh; all that can be wrought by the contention and strife which oftentimes mar the peace and quietness of the children of God, can never really hurt them, but, over-ruled by infinite wisdom, they work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose. These eventually drive the living children to seek closer and more intimate communion with Him.

III.—THE LORD'S SUPPORTING CARE—"I will water it every moment." Water is a beautiful Scriptural figure. Spiritual and refreshing truth abounds under this heavenly metaphor. In it is revealed the covenant care and concern of JEHOVAH over His Church and people. We read in Isa. xlv. 3—5: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto

the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Upon His thirsty plants God pours the water of His grace. But some are more than thirsty, parched up, as you see the dry gaping ground in times of drought. A little moist or dew of night will not suffice to saturate, soften, and satisfy the hard and parched ground. So in God's care of His vineyard, you may depend upon it, He knows that there are spots of spiritual experience where a little dew of heavenly blessing, or gentle showers of Divine grace, will not soften and satisfy the dry and thirsty souls of His people. Upon these He sends showers and floods of blessing in His season. Each part and particular of His vine has His prompt and patient attention. He will cause His rain, His showers, His floods, to descend and refresh His inheritance when it is weary. But our heavenly Husbandman is not confined to showers and floods. Look at His gracious promise in Hosea xiv. 5: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." For the Lord thus to manifest Himself to Israel, the time and the circumstances must be in accordance therewith. You will find no dew when the sun is pouring down its light and heat upon the earth; but when the sun is gone down, and it is dark, God gently distills the dew upon the drooping plants of His creation. So in His spiritual vineyard, when it is dark, and the Sun of Righteousness is set in the gloom of spiritual desertion, when painful bereavements are crushing the soul, and tender ties are riven never more to be united here, when doubts, and fears, and wretched unbelief have told their sad tales upon the spiritual and new man, then the dew of JEHOVAH'S heavenly grace and benediction will fall upon His own, to refresh, revive, and strengthen their drooping graces. But sometimes the plants of grace have neither dew nor refreshing showers. Still, even then they continue to flourish. How is this? My dear friends, our own God has His nether springs of grace underlying His painful and perplexing dealings with us in providence. Desert lands must be known and felt. Spiritual drought must be experienced but He will make His covenant promise good: "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water" (Isa. xli. 18). JEHOVAH'S springs of grace shall never fail to strengthen His plants and ripen His fruits. These shall be presented before His face with joy and thanksgiving, and not with grief, when we shall hear His gracious voice saying, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xi. 34). For the comfort and consolation of our exercised hearts, He has caused us to hear and understand those blessed words, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain."

May the Lord add His blessing.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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“LOVERS OF JEHOVAH.”

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,  
JANUARY 19TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“Ye that love the LORD, hate evil; He preserveth the souls of His saints; He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.”—Psalm xcvi. 10.

**T**HIS sounds like a precept, and a precept it is, to test and prove the genuineness of that work which God the Holy Ghost has begun in the experience of an elect sinner, to demonstrate the reality of His own faith in the hearts of the living children of God. Without this testing and proving by the precepts, the faith, fear, hope, and love of the children would remain useless and undemonstrated. These precepts, as they are called, are given to draw out our weakness, and to display JEHOVAH'S strength. Every command of God is given for the purpose of drawing out and demonstrating human inability, showing forth creature responsibility, and of creating opportunities for the display of Divine willingness to save and succour all those who are crushed under the grinding weight of their responsibility and inability.

We, who know Him, are taught, and delight in the fact, that His new covenant commands, as revealed in Christ Jesus, are not grievous. From the grace-filled lips of Jesus they prove to be no galling yoke of bondage. He leads us into the nature and design of them by His blessed Spirit, thereby showing us more and more of our weakness, want, and woe, and imparting to us, in every time of need, His strength and fulness, thus bringing us to an apprehension and enjoyment of those good things which He has treasured up for us in the Son of His love. He teaches us to thank, praise, and adore Him for every revelation of Himself, even when, in judgment upon our wretched flesh, He breaks our schemes of earthly pleasure, blights our gourds of fleshly delight, and severs our hearts from those objects

which would otherwise allure our hearts from Him. Yes, He graciously works in us by the power of His blessed Spirit, and gives us to experience the painful, yet profitable fact, that, on new covenant ground, and in harmony with new covenant promises, He can visit the flesh with judgment, while in the tenderest mercy He draws our souls into blessed and hallowed association with Himself. Now each child of God has two distinct and opposite natures. With one he is pleasing the devil; with the other he is pleasing God. With the old man he can never please God; with the new man he can never please the devil. The old nature delights and flourishes in sin; the new nature has love to nothing but purity. You see this in Romans vii. 25: "So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Look at those two words, "*I myself*." I with one nature serve the law of sin, and with the other the law of God. Those of you who are guided by the blessed Spirit into the hidden mysteries of the Divine life need not to be told that conflict is the lot of God's living children all through the wilderness. You know well what that means, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 17). Yes, the good that you would, you cannot do, and the evil that you would not, *that* you do. You would live a life of unclouded and uninterrupted faith; but you find you cannot; and yet, O, mystery of grace, you do. You live, yet not you, but Christ liveth in you. You live a life of faith, but it is the faith of the Son of God (Gal. ii. 20). You would live a life of praise, adoration, and thankfulness; but you mourn your lack of gratitude to Him who has done so much for you; yet all the praise you ever render to your God is through a rejoicing Surety and Friend by the indwelling of His blessed Spirit. You would praise and pray; but effort fails; the way of communion is barred; you know not how to praise Him for mercies received, or to pray unto Him for blessings promised. The evils of unbelief and indifference which you denounce are the very things that you do. Instead of always rejoicing, the first thing that appears to oppose your fleshly determination and self-will rouses up a spirit of murmuring and repining. You would live in continual sunshine; but the clouds of doubt, fear, and sin arise, and hide the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness from your view. But upon this I need not enlarge. We will look at the text:—

"Ye that love the LORD, hate evil; He preserveth the souls of His saints; He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked."

This portion dwelt upon my mind with much power long years ago, and came with much sweetness and light this after-

noon. It contains a precious declaration concerning God's own, and may be read thus:—

"Lovers of JEHOVAH, hate evil.

"He is keeping the souls of His gracious ones.

"From the hand of wicked men He will set them free."

The question may be asked, "Is there a necessity for this command to go forth, 'Lovers of JEHOVAH, hate evil?' Does not the nature He has given, in union with a risen and exalted Christ, hate evil?" Indeed it does. But the necessity for the command lies here: it is to prove to me my inability, and to bring to light the weakness and want of every living child of God. To make a place for the reception of every new covenant blessing, JEHOVAH'S new covenant command is conveyed by the covenant power of God the Holy Ghost, who works sweet and willing obedience in the hearts of eternally-loved and elect vessels of mercy. As He says to me, "Lovers of JEHOVAH," I do love Him by the sweet compulsion of His own love communicated to me. I cannot love Him according to my own power, will, or wisdom; but my love is drawn out to Him as His love is shed abroad in me. Blessed be His name, this He has done, is doing, and has bound Himself by covenant engagements to do for me and in me. As we look at ourselves in the light of the Divine perfections which shine in the person of Jesus Christ, and as we meditate upon the written Word of God with our spiritual understandings, we see that by nature we can do anything but love God, His Christ, His truth, or His people. By nature we are alienated from God, and enemies in our minds by wicked works (Col. i. 21). Ay, and we are haters of JEHOVAH, as He is pleased to display the sovereignty of His will. We are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; we are without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (Eph. ii. 12). It matters not what our knowledge or profession may be, as the true-born sons and daughters of Adam, we are without Him, destitute of His love, and it is utterly impossible for us to manifest the slightest evidence of love to Him.

Look at that awful description given of poor human nature in Titus iii. 3: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Come with me to Eph. ii. 1—3: "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Mark this third verse: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Now, no child of God is a child of His wrath. From everlasting to everlasting, from the covenant to the consummation of all things, the whole of JEHOVAH'S elect sons and daughters have ever been the objects of His love. This Scripture does not say we were the children of God's wrath. We must interpret this, as well as every other portion, in the light of the context. In the second verse we read of the children of disobedience. Whose disobedience? Not God's. Whose wrath? God's wrath? Never. God as a God of wrath to His own! He cannot be. "Children of wrath"—that is to say, wrathful children. All those not brought under the power of covenant love can be nothing else but wrathful children, displaying the proclivities and propensities of their nature and disposition. Turn to Romans viii. 7, where the testimony of God is, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The carnal mind is not subject, neither can it be subject to God or His law. Look again at Ephesians iv. 18, 19: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Mark well those words of Paul: "The old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. iv. 22). Now, this does not mean only those who frequent the haunts of vice, for uncleanness is manifested in all places, *picus* as well as profane, where the Spirit's declaration of God's Christ is not received, and where He is not the First, the Last, and the All in all.

"Lovers of JEHOVAH" are those whom He has singled out as His own, upon whom He has pitched His uninfluenced, immutable grace, and in whose hearts He has shed abroad His own sweet love, by the Holy Ghost given unto them (Rom. v. 5). Thus blessed, we can say sometimes, though not every hour of the day, "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John iv. 19). Now the selfsame child of God, who has experienced His love, will be brought to feel his lack of it, having no bright apprehension of an interest therein, and longing for some sweet revelation of Him who was Love Incarnate, he can sing in plaintive notes with Watts,—

"Dear Lord, and shall I ever live  
At this poor dying rate?  
*My* love so faint, so cold to Thee,  
And Thine to *me* so great."

Sometimes the loved ones of JEHOVAH are brought to lower spots than these, to the experience of that described in Newton's precious hymn, which has been sneered at by flaunting professors,—

" 'Tis a point I long to know  
(Oft it causes anxious thought),  
Do I love the Lord, or no?  
Am I His, or am I not?"

Mark you! I cannot sneer at it, for if I did, I should fear I had sneered at a blessed evidence of Divine life in many an exercised child of God. The question thus revolves in the heart of the tempted and tried Zionite, "If I loved a covenant God, why should I be so lifeless, listless, indifferent, and cold? Why should I feel such apathy in reading His blessed Word, singing His praises, and joining with His people at the hour of prayer? Can it be that I love Him when I feel colder than the very seat I sit upon?" Some of you can say, Six days in the week are given up to bread winning, during which any other book is preferred to His own Word—can it be that I love Him? Oh, say some, the case of a real child of God can never be so desperate as that. Now you take notice during the next six days, for the purpose of judging yourselves before Him, and see how often God's Word is taken up in comparison to the number of times that other books are found in your fingers. I am often filled with astonishment in finding free-grace people so niggardly in connection with the publication and sending forth of God's precious truth, when compared with what they lavish upon newspapers and periodicals which only contain that which disturbs the peace, and distracts the devotion of the living child of God. With the knowledge of these things, well may we ask our souls the question, If I were a child of so loving a Father, is it possible that I could live so? Ah, my dear friends, it is not only possible, but it is a fact. O what a marvellous mystery of grace it is when our own God reveals Himself as the God of love in the loveliness of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, by the grace and gentleness of His Spirit, when He draws nigh and sweetly whispers to the heart, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3).

Another child of God may say, "I know and feel that there is everything in a precious Christ to cause me to love Him. When I see His self-denying life, His precious wounds, His perfect righteousness, His powerful intercession, His peerless beauty, all these draw out my soul's admiration, and I cannot help but love Him; but this is the question of questions, Does He love me?" Ah! a poor, tried and exercised saint one said, "See! If it were possible for Him to spurn me from His face, and sink me to the lowest depths of eternal damnation, I could not help but love Him; but what I want settling in my heart is this, Does He love me?" It is of the Lord's mercy that we know by Divine warrant and the teaching of His Spirit, we can only love Him as He reveals His love in it, and draws out the affections of our heart to Him. Love to Him can only be manifested in opportunities of His own giving. A short time previous to the departure of my dear friend, Thomas Simmons, of Manchester, to Emmanuel's glory land, darkness, thick darkness, amounting to self-despair, wrapped itself around him like



a mantle. I called to see him. He could take no promise as belonging to him. Bending to his ear, I repeated that sweet verse of Newton's,—

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear;  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear.”

“Is there no sweetness here for you?” I asked. In the bitterness of his spirit, the old man roared out, “No.” In a moment, as if Divinely prompted, I said,

“How *nasty* the name of Jesus sounds,”

when he instantly cried out, “No no, I can't have that!” Here I would ask some of you who are writing bitter things against yourselves, but who have not one bitter thought of Him, Can you sit for five minutes and listen to something like Gospel, but which casts a reflection upon the character of your covenant God, without exhibiting signs of your indignation and disapproval? Indeed you cannot. Can you listen to the unscriptural sophistries of Socinians without showing your ire? No! your whole soul rises up in arms against that which is derogatory to the person and perfections of a precious Christ. Can you listen quietly to what the Arminian brings forward, calling into question the eternity and immutability of JEHOVAH'S love? Can you delight to hear anything short of that which declares the certainty of God's love and security of His people? You cannot. Listen to this,—

“What from Christ that soul shall sever,  
Bound by everlasting bands?  
Once in Him, in Him for ever;  
Thus th' eternal covenant stands;  
None shall pluck thee  
From the Strength of Israel's hands.”

You glory in a Gospel which proclaims the perfections of JEHOVAH'S will, the irresistibility of His power, the immutability of His love, and the riches of His grace. These rouse the affections of your soul in admiration and love of His glorious truth.

Are you “lovers of JEHOVAH” the Father? How do you know it? Only by the revelation of His truth in you, and the heavenly wisdom and spiritual ability given you to read your character as such in the light of it. Is He to you the God of all grace? Are you persuaded that if you are saved at all it is by a stroke of His matchless wisdom, omnipotent power, and infinite love, yes, the stretching forth of His long, strong, powerful arm of love, to save you from the curse and from everlasting damnation? Then you must love Him. Have you been melted under a sense of His paternal love in providing for your salvation, and patiently bearing with your manners in the

wilderness? If so, you will be able to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also,—

" More of Thy love, my God, I find,  
In every hour I live ;  
More of Thy peace in heart and mind  
Doth each sharp trial give.

Up to my Father's high decree  
Each act in time I trace ;  
Up to the glorious sovereign Three—  
Almighty Fount of grace."

By the faith of His own giving and working, I know that every trial, temptation, tribulation, disappointment, dissatisfaction, and experience of spiritual death, comes from Him; and all my knowledge of sin, vanity, and conceit, is for the eventual exaltation of His Christ as my God and Saviour, and to prove that I am not too bad for His kindness and love to reach. Count over your miseries, but let the Lord's sweet mercies be placed side by side with them, and then you will be delighted to trace all your times up to Him as " The Great First Cause of all events."

" Times the tempter's power to prove ;  
Times to taste a Saviour's love ;  
All must come, and last, and end,  
As shall please my heavenly Friend."

We see at times our Father's covenant love preparing our pathway, and His covenant care providing for every necessity. This draws out our hearts in praise and thanksgiving, feeling that " we love Him because He first loved us."

Are you "lovers of JEHOVAH" the Son? Then such precious truths as these will gladden your heart,—

" The Man who lived, and died, and rose,  
To perfume heaven with blood ;  
To Him my soul her pardon owes,  
And claims Him for her God.

There high He dwells in ether bright,  
The great Incarnate Word,  
Where suns to darkness dwindle quite,  
Before their radiant Lord.

Thence, low He stoops to watch the lot  
Of souls to Him once given ;  
And makes the dying sinner's cot  
The glorious gate of heaven."

Do you know that He has been watching unceasingly over you? In the days of His flesh His whole soul was exercised with the burdens, crushing weights, and infirmities of His people. Through a life of sorrow He struggled against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in His glorious salvation, bruised body, and precious blood has provided sweet and precious food for the lambs and sheep of His flock. Can you listen to love like this and remain unmoved? Yes, we say it with confusion of face

and contrition of heart, we have listened to the tale of His sorrows, and the report of His agonies, unmoved. See! There in love His hands are extended and His feet transfixed to the accursed tree.

“Dwell on the sight, my stony heart,  
Till every pulse within  
Shall into contrite sorrow start,  
And hate the thought of sin.”

Can you listen to the truths concerning His sweet and all-powerful intercession as He stands as our great High Priest before the face of His Father, opening His mouth for His poor dumb children who cannot speak for themselves? Ah, my dear friends, this we oftentimes do; yet it is our high privilege to know that, like as He sympathised with His sleeping disciples in Gethsemane, so He will sympathise with and succour us. Oh! how sweet and precious it is to have this one verse playing about our heart and courting us into the presence of His Father and ours,—

“Not on me, Lord, not on me,  
I am all iniquity;  
Look on Thine anointed One,  
Who before Thy glorious throne  
On His breast bears my poor name,  
All my load of sin and shame—  
Look on Him, my Surety.”

This is the experience, not of those who pride themselves in being believers, but those who mourn because of their accursed unbelief. Those who cannot help themselves, but have everything done for them by a covenant God, love and esteem JEHOVAH-JESUS.

Are you “lovers of JEHOVAH” the Spirit? Yes, you are if He has convinced you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Has He convinced you that there is sin in all you do and produce? Has He revealed to you the blessed fact that all that Christ has done is the very opposite to sin, and it is all yours? Then you must love Him. We think it something if we are received into the houses of the great, and still more if those in superior stations in life condescend to sojourn with us in our humble dwellings. But look at the condescending love of God the Holy Ghost. He lives and rules in our hearts, and breathes heaven’s sweet peace into our weary spirits. Yes, He condescends to dwell in these bodies of sin and death, these bodies of our humiliation, and there He will abide until, divested of the burden of the flesh, we stand in the presence of our Lord, and serve Him without sin. Can you do anything but love so gracious a Spirit? We may well sing with the redeemed Atheist,—

“And Thou eternal Spirit vast,  
What love can Thine transcend?  
Since Thou Thy lot with me hath cast,  
Indwelling God and Friend.”

Let me ask you, Has the blessed Spirit put the question, the threefold question, which Jesus put to Peter, and which had respect to his threefold denial of Him? "Lovest thou Me?" In this inward questioning we are brought into fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Jesus appears and says, Lovest thou Me in union with My Father and in union to thee by the grace and indwelling of My Spirit? In answer to this our trembling and adoring hearts can say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee. Some of us to-night are melted under the power of His love, while tears of spiritual affection moisten our eyes. Father, Son, and Spirit, Israel's Triune JEHOVAH, Thou knowest that we love Thee.

We now come to notice the blessed fact contained in this new covenant command, that the "lovers of JEHOVAH hate evil." In this hatred and abhorrence of evil where shall we begin. At home? With whom? With myself. And what am I? In myself unmingled evil. See Gen. vi. 5: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." By the teaching of the Holy Ghost "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18), and I am thus led to hate myself. You start and ask, Is that true? I answer, Yes, I do hate myself with a cordial hatred, according to that testimony in Ezek. xvi. 63: "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the LORD;" and Ezek. xxxvi. 31: "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." This utter abhorrence of self the Lord alone can explain. See! This loathing is "for your iniquities and for your abominations." I do hate evil wherever it appears in opposition to my God and to His own good work of grace in my heart. I have an *evil heart of unbelief*, and I hate it. Lord, it oftentimes carries me far away from the enjoyment of Thy sweet company and from the experience of Thy love.

"Lord, take my heart and let it be  
For ever closed to all but Thee."

I hate evil thoughts, and yet they haunt me day and night.  
My frequent cry to the God of all my mercies is—

"With thoughts of Christ and things Divine  
Fill up this foolish heart of mine."

The Psalmist said, "I hate vain thoughts" (Psa. cxix. 113), while Jeremiah blessedly indicates that these vain thoughts are only lodgers (Jer. iv. 14). Troublesome lodgers they are, but when our school days are over, and our spiritual education is finished, there will be a perfect and everlasting riddance of the

whole. "Hate evil." I do hate the devil, the evil one, because of his hatred to God's Christ, his terrible temptations, his villainous insinuations, his accursed injections, and his designs which are all derogatory to the character of the Christ of God; His delight is to cast lying reflections upon God's well beloved Son. I hate his hellish injections with which he worries me and which he fathers upon me. He is ever ready to apply the torch of infidelity to my already doubting mind, and set me off dead against the Book of God, the Christ of God, the work of God, and the people of God. I hate him because he would lead me to deny my God and Saviour altogether.

We hate this present evil world and long for deliverance out of it.

"We're not of the world, that fadeth away;  
We're not of the night, but children of day:  
The chains that once bound us, by Jesus are riv'n,  
We're strangers on earth, and our home is in heaven."

Yet we long to tarry here, and would defer the day of our departure for Emmanuel's glory land. Why? Because nature cannot rise above itself. It will cling to objects near and dear. With all the harshness and severity which many attach to my spirit, I thank God that *that* brand of reprobation, "*without natural affection*" (Rom. i. 31), does not belong to me. I cling to the dear ones, wife, children, especially the ailing ones and the absent one. Yet my chastened spirit would ever bow in grateful submission to a loving Father's will, and sing,—

"Father, whate'er of earthly bliss  
Thy sovereign will denies,  
Accepted at Thy throne of grace,  
Let this petition rise:  
  
Give me a calm, a thankful heart,  
From every murmur free;  
The blessings of Thy grace impart,  
And let me live to Thee.  
  
Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine,  
My life and death attend;  
Thy presence through my journey shine,  
And crown my journey's end."

Ah! I can tell you, the experience breathed through the whole of that precious hymn is worth living, suffering, and sorrowing for. It enables poor, persecuted pilgrims to bear up under all the evils of their journey home.

I hate evil in principle and in persons, though it is my sorrowful experience oftentimes to feel and say with Paul, "The evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. vii. 19). Can I love a Socinian or Unitarian who sneers at the Godhead of my adorable Lord and Saviour? Never. Can I love the Pope, who arrogates to himself every attribute of Deity, and burlesques every truth of God's glorious Gospel? You know I could as soon love Satan himself. Can I love the fleshly free-willer, whose

creed displays a discordant Deity, a dishonoured Father, a disappointed Christ, a defeated Holy Ghost, and a defective salvation? Not I. I must fall back upon the God-inspired declaration of the Psalmist: "I have hated them that regard lying vanities" (Psalm xxxi. 6). Yet, blessed be His holy name for the revelation of His matchless grace to one so unworthy, I can say, "I love the LORD, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications" (Psalm cxvi. 1). The covenant command of a covenant God to a covenant people, which must be obeyed, is, "Lovers of JEHOVAH, hate evil."

"He preserveth the souls of His saints;" or, "*He is keeping the souls of His gracious ones.*" The latter rendering is more comprehensive. God's saints are His gracious ones. Graced in the Beloved, and blessed with all spiritual blessings needful for time and for eternity. Thus blessed and favoured, they "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter i. 5). Through all the dangers, difficulties and doubts of the desert wanderings He defends them. In all their temptations, tribulations, and tumults He keeps their souls in safety near to Himself. In all their sufferings and sorrows He holds them in His hands, saves them by His power, and confers upon them every needful new covenant blessing. Are they loved with an everlasting love? Eternal wrath can never overtake them. Are they ordained to eternal life? Eternal death can never touch them. Are they redeemed with precious blood? The flames of hell can never consume them. Are they the children of the resurrection? Over them the second death can have no power. Are they the children of God? They never can be the children of the devil. Do spiritual enemies hover over them? Their own God will teach them to say, "O GOD, the Lord, the Strength of my salvation, Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle" (Psalm cxl. 7). Do they faint in the day of adversity, because their own strength is small? "Underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. xxxiii. 27). Do dangers lurk on every hand? "He is a wall of fire round about" His Zion, "and the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. ii. 5). As the true Israel of God, we can safely sing:—

"He guides our feet, He guards our way;  
His morning smiles bless all the day;  
He spreads the evening veil, and keeps  
The silent hour, while Israel sleeps."

"He delivered them out of the hand of the wicked;" or "*From the hand of wicked men He will set them free.*" The wicked would seduce and destroy the righteous if he could; but he cannot. The saints are surrounded, guarded, and defended by Omnipotence. In the New Testament JEHOVAH'S delivering grace and power are set forth in prayer, experience, and fact, the word deliver always referring to the removal of the saints

from an unenviable spot to one of safety and repose. See! "Deliver us from evil" (Matt. vi. 13). This is a Divinely taught prayer for freedom from the power of Satan, sin, and self. Turn to Romans xv. 30, 31: "Strive together with me in prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea." This is a Spirit-wrought desire for separation from unbelieving professors. Come with me to 2 Cor. i. 10: "Who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." You see that God's deliverances are so many pledges of future and full deliverances. Turn to 2 Tim. iv. 16—18: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me: notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me: that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion; and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work; and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

May He add His blessing. Amen.

### HYMN SUNG AFTER THE SERMON.

SOV'REIGN grace o'er sin abounding,  
Ransom'd souls the tidings swell;  
'Tis a deep that knows no sounding,  
Who its breadth or length can tell?  
On its glories  
Let my soul for ever dwell.

What from Christ that soul shall sever  
Bound by everlasting bands?  
Once in Him, in Him for ever;  
Thus th' eternal covenant stands;  
None shall pluck thee  
From the Strength of Israel's hands.

Heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus,  
Long ere time its race begun;  
To His name eternal praises,  
O what wonders love hath done!  
One with Jesus,  
By eternal union ONE.

On such love, my soul still ponder,  
Love so great, so rich, so free;  
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,  
Why, O Lord, such love to me?  
Hallelujah,  
Grace shall reign eternally.

JOHN KENT.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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“THE MASTERS OF ASSEMBLIES.”

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
APRIL 13TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the Masters of assemblies, which are given from one Shepherd.”—Eccles. xii. 11.

IT is a covenant mercy, and a distinguishing favour from the God of all grace to be led by the blessed Spirit into the treasures of spiritual and heavenly instruction, which are to be found in the deep couching beneath the letter of God's written Word. To some this gracious privilege is granted, from others it is withheld. To the wise and prudent of this world blindness and hardness of heart is given, while to the babes, weaklings, and little ones in God's family, those who feelingly and experimentally have no wisdom, and who can cry from the depths of their sorrows sincerely unto Him, “Lord, we are fools,” He is graciously pleased to reveal Himself as their Wisdom and their All. Apart from Him they are destitute of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge; but in Christ Jesus they have Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption, and Glory. Into the hands of His tried and tempted, scattered and peeled ones, He puts His blessed Book and engrafts its gracious and glorious contents in their hearts. In the written Word His mind is declared, in the engrafted Word His life is deposited. Yes, He deposits His will in a God-given, Spirit-enlightened, and graciously opened understanding, and we are led to see and speak of the glory of God's grace, which is hidden from the worldling and mere professor, in a manner which causes them to look on and wonder whether we have the same Bible as they possess. The genuineness of my Bible has been called into question many times, but it has been my mercy to know that the Bible I possess is the old one written by holy men who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. It contains a Father's



gracious message of love and salvation to His elect children, the heirs of grace, the heirs of a kingdom which can never be moved, the heirs of God. Upon its title page may well be written without doing violence to its contents,

“FOR GOD’S ELECT.”

It may be asked, Why then distribute it indiscriminately throughout the world? I answer, Because it is not ours to judge who are God’s elect and who are not. We can only light upon certain here and there in whom the truth of God has graciously wrought and brought to a saving knowledge of Himself, to whom He has shown tokens for good, and from whom He has drawn gracious evidences of their election and redemption. Therefore we circulate the Scriptures and preach the Word at every opportunity, knowing that it pleases Him through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Let us notice the design of the Holy Ghost in this book of Ecclesiastes. What is it? It is to set forth the utter ruin, total depravity, and universal corruption of fallen humanity, and that everything apart from the Lord Jesus Christ can yield nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit. In the contemplation of a ruin so vast we may well sing,—

“Change and decay in all around I see :  
O Thou who changest not abide with me.”

A characteristic phrase of the book is, “*under the sun.*” If we lose sight of the truth which the Spirit conveys in these three words, we must fail to apprehend His mind throughout the whole Book. In it He is pleased to reveal the folly, madness, and vanity of man, and show unto His own that nought but the fulness of Christ’s grace and glory will truly satisfy their waiting hearts. “*Under the sun.*” What sun see we here but that set forth in Mal. iv. 2?—“But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.” In a spiritual and heavenly manner the saints are in this Sun, the beams of which dart light, health, comfort, and consolation to them while they remain here below. In Him we have life eternal, love unchangeable, light unsullied, and liberty inalienable. In Christ Jesus we have blessings which can never be forfeited, and bounties which can never fade, while out of Him is nothing but “vanity and vexation of spirit.” Mark you; if there is a man in all God’s creation who has greater cause than another to live a life of unceasing gratitude and thankfulness, I am the man. There is not one in this congregation can see greater cause for constant praise than I; yet, where am I? In my feelings oft-times “*under the sun,*” mourning and murmuring, with no sweet enjoyment of the presence and preciousness of Him who is my All in all.

Now look at the conclusion of this inspired argument which you find in the thirteenth verse of the last chapter, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole *duty* of man." Duty! Do I love it? Yes, in its proper place. Can I do it? If I were to say I could, I should be a Pharisee. My desire is to act in perfect accordance with the mind and will of God as revealed in His blessed Word; but imperfections and failures are mine. Look at this command: "Fear God, and keep His commandments." To whom is this addressed. To all mankind? No; for the mind of the reprobate is void of judgment in Divine things, the understanding is darkened, the will perverse, and the whole nature enmity against God. To give such a commandment to these would be utter folly and contrary to the wisdom and omniscience of JEHOVAH. In our day there are thousands with an open Bible before them, but the spiritual meaning is hidden from their view. With all the ramifications and efforts of missionary societies there are yet millions who have never heard the glorious sound of the Gospel, nor even a missionary's voice. This is proof sufficient that the command is not for all mankind. It is for all those to whom God will speak His glorious command set forth by the pen of Solomon, "My son, give me thy heart" (Prov. xxiii. 26). This is a portion of God's Word from which wondrous capital has been made in Arminian communities and free-will fraternities. Perverters of God's truth address indiscriminately whole congregations and call upon them to give God their hearts. These see not that the command flows from covenant relationship. Look at the address, "My son." Now notice the demand: "give me thy heart." The question with me is, Have I such a heart as God can accept? We read, "They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xi. 20); again, "He that hath a froward heart findeth no good" (Prov. xvii. 20). Here we see that a man who possesses only a froward heart cannot be he to whom this command is addressed, and that indiscriminate commands, invitations, exhortations, or entreaties by a minister to a congregation are contrary to the mind and will of God. The command of God issuing from the pen of Solomon simply means, "My son, give me thine undivided attention while I reveal to thee the mysteries of My love, and the riches of My grace." When the Father speaks to us by the power of the Holy Ghost after that fashion, don't you think our ears and hearts are all attention? Ay, indeed they are. Compliance with, and obedience to, the commands of JEHOVAH can only be found in the person and work of the God-Man, the Surety of the covenant, and the Saviour of His people. "Fear God." According to the mind of the Father, none ever did this fully and perfectly but the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn with me to Heb. v. 7: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up

prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." Christ, as the Covenantee and Representative of His people, feared God without intermission from first to last. "And keep His commandments." Who has ever done this? Can you find one mortal in all God's creation, who, invariably, in thought, purpose, imagination, desire, look, word, and act, keeps God's commandments? You cannot; but God has found one perfect Man in the person of His own dear Son who kept all His commandments for all the members of His mystical body. "This is the whole of man." The word *duty* you will see is in italics. Satan knew what he was doing when he made that interpolation through our translators. Fearing God and keeping His commandments, thus working out a glorious righteousness, is the whole mind and desire of the God-Man for elect men in Him. Let us look at that word *duty* for a moment or two. It is an elegant word in some places, but a very ugly one here. It is a word utterly at variance with that glorious liberty of the Gospel with which Christ makes His people free. Our Gospel of free and sovereign grace knows nothing of the creature's duty. Some of you may be ready to say, "You renounce the word *duty* in connection with the Gospel and yet you find it in your 318th hymn." Yes, and I thank God that we have it in that precious hymn by Dr. Watts,—

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,  
I read *my duty* in Thy Word."

That justly condemns me; but this graciously justifies me,—

"But in Thy life the law appears,  
Drawn out in living characters."

Tell me it is my duty to pray, repent, and believe? I reply, I can neither pray, repent, nor believe on that ground. Turn to Luke xvii. 10: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Mark the order. Duty, unprofitableness, death, damnation.

It is ours now for a little while, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, to seek His mind in the precious portion I have read by way of text.

I.—THE WISE—Who are they?

II.—THEIR WORDS—What are they? Goads and nails.

III.—THE WORKERS—Who are they? "The Masters of assemblies."

IV.—THE COMMUNICATOR—Who is He? "The One Shepherd."

I.—THE WISE—Who are they? In Job xxviii. 12, the question is asked, "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" Again, ver. 20: "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?"

Search through the sacred Scriptures and you will see that from Adam's fall to the end of time, spiritual, heavenly wisdom cannot be found in man naturally. Solomon tells us very plainly, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child” (Prov. xxii. 15). He means every child springing by natural descent from the loins of Adam, and nothing is wanting but time and opportunity for the display of that foolishness. Look at that terrible description of the whole human family given in the latter part of Romans i.: “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse; because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” This is a very humbling truth—the greater the wisdom a man possesses being destitute of the wisdom which is from above, the greater fool he is in Divine things. See how Paul states man's ignorance in Eph. iv. 18: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.” See how he describes himself as he stood in nature's folly: “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Titus iii. 3). Where, then, is wisdom to be found? or, where are the wise to be found? Not among the sons and daughters of Adam according to natural descent. The wise, who are they? We will commence with the fountain, and hope we shall not end with the streams. We love to begin with God and end with Him, the Fountain, Source, and Sum of all spiritual wisdom. Of the Father it is said, “Blessed be the name of God for ever: for wisdom and might are His: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan. ii. 20, 21). The Son is styled, “The Wisdom of God” (1 Cor. i. 24). Notice how the passage reads: “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the Wisdom of God.” But not only is the Father the Fountain of wisdom, and Christ the Wisdom of God, but the Holy Ghost is equally so with them. See Eph. i. 17: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.”

Thus we see all wisdom treasured up in the great Three-in-One, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is fully set forth in Col. ii. 2, 3: "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. In whom"—that is, in the Divine Three-in-One—"are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

It is our mercy to know that all the election of grace, in God's appointed time, the set time of favour, shall be made wise unto salvation through the operation and grace of God the eternal Spirit. In the riches of His grace the Father hath abounded toward His elect in all wisdom and prudence (Eph. i. 8), and by the Spirit they are filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col. i. 9). Here we see the communication of that which the apostle calls "The manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10). It is God's wisdom revealed in the choice of His people in Christ Jesus, the means He has in His own hands for bringing His people to Himself, their redemption by the precious blood of Christ, their being cleansed from all sin in the fountain opened for Israel's uncleanness, their justification in the spotless obedience of the God-Man, their sustenance by the spiritual provisions of His house, and their safe conduct to the inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and reserved in heaven for them. This wisdom He displays and reveals in a sovereign manner, according to that marvellous statement in Luke x. 21, 22: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, is the Revealer of all spiritual and heavenly wisdom; and all those to whom this wisdom is revealed and communicated are wise in the wisdom of the Father, wise in the person of a precious Christ, and wise by the grace and indwelling of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. We are now brought to notice—

II.—THEIR WORDS—What are they? They are described as goads and nails. The words of the wise, revealed in the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, were given by the Father to the Son before the worlds were framed, for the communication of His mind to His people. Turn with me to John xvii. 8, where the words of the Surety of the covenant, and the Father's righteous Servant are recorded: "For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they

have believed that Thou didst send Me." This reveals a God-sent Christ communicating heavenly wisdom and life-giving words to His elect disciples by His Spirit's power. Thus we see that the words which convey the mind of JEHOVAH the Father to our hearts, were given by Him to the Son for that purpose before the worlds were framed. These words of heavenly wisdom prove to be words of Divine power in the experience of every elect son and daughter of the Lord Almighty. You see this in the precious statement of Psalm cx. 2, 3: "The LORD shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." This is the Gospel of God which is His power unto salvation to every one that believeth (Rom. i. 16). If you will search through the Scriptures of truth, you are sure to see that every God-sent messenger delivered his commission in Divinely-appointed words, and not in his own. This appears in the declaration of Micaiah to the messenger of the king: "And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak." Look at God's commission to Jeremiah: "He that hath My word, let him speak it faithfully" (chap. xxiii. 28). Have you not noticed JEHOVAH'S charge to Ezekiel?—"And thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (chap. ii. 7). In strict accordance with this, Paul addressed the Ephesian elders at Miletus: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts xx. 26, 27). These last words are generally altered and perverted into "*the whole counsel of God.*" Mark you, the apostle never aspired to such heights as to be able to declare the whole of God's counsel. Divinely-communicated wisdom laid him low at the feet of sovereign mercy and caused him to confess, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. xiii. 9—12). I do not know the whole counsel of God; but all the counsel that He is pleased to reveal to me, it is my privilege to deliver in your ears. Happy minister of God is he who can face his people before the great Heart-searcher and say, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you" (Acts xx. 20).

"The words of the wise" are JEHOVAH'S own words. They form His own glorious Gospel. This Gospel is styled, "the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24); "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. i. 11); "glad tidings" (Acts xiii. 32). Blessed be God, the Gospel is glad tidings for all to whom He sends it. Glad tidings to prisoners groaning for liberty. Glad tidings conveying unsearchable riches to bankrupt sinners. Glad tidings proclaiming salvation to those who are feelingly lost. Glad tidings revealing the wisdom of God to those who mourn over their spiritual ignorance. Glad tidings

imparting spiritual life to favoured sinners dead in trespasses and sin. God's Gospel reveals not vague propositions; but sets forth unfailing purposes, faithful promises, and perfect performances. Man's inability and God's ability is the theme throughout. God All in all; man nothing. The Father planned, the Son performed, the Spirit perfects my salvation. God for me, God with me, and God in me is my salvation. Nothing short of God in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost will do for me. Christ Jesus my Wisdom! Christ Jesus my Righteousness! Christ Jesus my Sanctification! Christ Jesus my Redemption! Christ Jesus my Glory! Christ Jesus my All in all! I need not to be told that I am put in possession of a stock of grace by Him, whereby I may work my way to heaven, for I am sure if aught depends upon me, I shall work my way to hell. I love to read my Father's will as revealed in the person and work of Jesus. I love to trace the workings of that will in me by the guidance of the Holy Ghost. It is His to bring me into spots of felt necessity where the voice of the Beloved will be sweet, where His promises will be precious, where His gracious communications will be comforting, and His revelations of Himself will be prized more than hid treasure, or all that this world calls good and great.

*"The words of the wise are as goads."* What is a goad? A sharp pointed stick or stave used for the purpose of inciting, urging, and encouraging oxen in the yoke to increased speed and labour. What are JEHOVAH'S own words? Listen! "Where the word of a King is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest Thou" (Eccles. viii. 4). The power of the King's words was known and felt on the day of Pentecost, when the three thousand "were pricked in the heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts. ii. 37). Here God's goads were applied by His own power, awaking elect souls to a sense of their sin, guilt, shame, and due desert, and causing them to seek the Lord and His salvation with full purpose of heart. You see this again in the case of Saul of Tarsus when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared to him on his way to Damascus. "And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom Thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts ix. 4, 5). There are the goads, not in the hands of any God-sent minister, or by the declaration of any deeply-taught or highly-favoured one. The piercing of JEHOVAH'S goads of conviction are described by Paul in Rom. vii. 9—11: "For I was alive with the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." Such goading, piercing, and

killing work is but the evidence of eternal life begun. But God has His goads for drowsy, declining saints. "Thou art the man," from Nathan's lips was God's goad to the heart of sinning, guilty David (2 Sam. xii. 1—14). "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" were Christ's goads to incite the love of weak and wavering Peter (John xxi. 15—17).

*"The words of the wise are as nails."* As the goads indicate perseverance and encouragement, so the nails set forth endurance and establishment. These nails, no doubt, refer to the nails or pegs of the shepherds' tents. Against the storms and tempests to which Eastern shepherds are subject it was necessary for them to secure themselves by driving firmly in the ground the pegs or nails to which their tent cords were secured. In this we have a hidden meaning. When God will make the poor frail tent or tabernacle of His child His dwelling-place, He fastens home His nails of Divine truth and His pegs of spiritual promise. When His word is spoken home to the heart of His child by Divine power and fastened by covenant love, not all the storms of earth, and sin, and hell can remove it. Peter knew something of this when he wrote to the scattered strangers: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, *which liveth and abideth for ever*" (1 Pet. i. 23). James grasped the same truth when he wrote of the engrafted Word which is able to save the soul (James i. 21). It was the possession of this truth that caused the apostle Paul to write at the close of that marvellous piece of Divine logic, 1 Cor. xv.: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord."

III.—THE WORKERS—Who are they? The Masters of assemblies. Let me ask, Did you ever hear this sentence quoted correctly? I never did. Scores of time I have heard it misquoted in prayer meetings. The *Master of assemblies* has been asked to be present. Look at the text and you will find the word in the plural. It is the Masters, not "the Master of assemblies." We will notice first the assemblies. What are they? They are the assemblies of God's elect, redeemed, and living people; God's scattered and peeled ones gathered together by the power of the Holy Ghost to the person, perfections, and preciousness of Jesus. As you see this people gathered together, according to that Scripture which I endeavoured to speak to you from one Sunday morning a short time ago, the text of that published sermon entitled, "Consecrated Ground," "For where two or three are gathered together in My name," you are sure there must be a Gatherer, or Gatherers. Now, the Gatherers of the scattered elect are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That was a glorious gathering in the purpose of the Father, before all worlds, when He gave the whole body of His elect to Jesus.



" 'Twas with an everlasting love  
That God His own elect embrac'd,  
Before He made the worlds above,  
Or earth on her huge columns plac'd."

Here in covenant we see the Head, with all His members, forming one glorious Man in the view of the Father. In the time arranged and settled in the eternal counsels, these are gathered together in the assemblies of God's Zion, where JEHOVAH will be to them a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat, and Christ will be experienced in them the Hope of glory. In New Testament times He graciously appeared in the midst of His assemblies. Sometimes they clustered round His feet to learn His will, while at others they gathered round His table to feed upon the provisions of His grace, where He said unto them, "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or He that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke xxii. 27). The Servant of the covenant is one of the Masters of assemblies. Now notice that assembly on the day of Pentecost. "They were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts ii. 1, 2). The voice of God was heard in the house, and His power was felt in the heart through the testimony of Peter, which proved to be goads from God to drive them out of self and enshrine a precious Christ in their affections. As He was experienced in their hearts, He showed Himself a Master in the midst of their assembly. Turn with me now to Hebrews xii. 22—24: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Blessed with privileges so great and gracious, the Hebrew Christians were thus counselled by the apostle: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (chap. x. 25). Blessed assembly where Jesus is first, last, and All in all. See what a glorious description we have of this in Rev. xiv. 1—5. The Lamb on Mount Sion, surrounded with His reserved, redeemed and rejoicing company.

" Ere long I hope to join the throng,  
And bow before the King;  
And in one everlasting song  
My hallelujah bring."

Now look Scripturally at the Masters of assemblies. Come with me to Malachi i. 6: "A son honoureth his father, and a

servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is My fear? saith the LORD of hosts.” There we see the Father claiming His honour; the Master of the household of faith calling for His fear. Now turn to Matt. xxiii. 8—10: “But be not ye called, Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ.” The Father and the Son are blessedly set forth as the Masters, Teachers, and Guides of an elect people. See John vi. 45: “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me.” Now turn to John xiv. 26: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” But mark especially John xvi. 7—15: “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove”—or convince by His piercing words, which are as goads—“the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me: of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” There you see the Masters of assemblies. Tell me! Do you wish to assemble as the children of the Father without His gracious presence? Do you desire to assemble together in the name of Jesus without His blessed person? Do you want to hear of the Father’s love and of the Son’s grace without the indwelling and guidance of the Holy Ghost? I know you do not. Blessed with the inspiring power and establishing grace of the Three Masters of assemblies, we can sing, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.” The words of the wise are fastened to the hearts of elect sinners by the Three Divine Masters. I may preach to the ear, but I cannot reach the heart. My words are but as empty vapour without the Spirit’s power. Joseph Irons’s hymn is painfully, yet pleasantly, true:—

“We have listen’d to the preacher,  
Truth by him has now been shown;  
But we want a greater Teacher  
From the everlasting throne.  
Application  
Is the work of God alone.”

Peter knew this when he wrote of the preaching which is "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Epistle i. 12). I cannot tell the peculiar spots in providence with the temptations, doubts, fears, and unbelief that may possess the minds of many of you this morning; but the Masters know all about them and can direct right home and fasten in a sure place words of consolation and sweet encouragement.

IV.—THE COMMUNICATOR—Who is He? The One Shepherd. This takes all the conceit out of those who think they are something because of their position as pastors, or shepherds. The man who is brought to see the truth revealed in that precious chapter I read to you just now, Ezek. xxxiv., is sure to experience great searchings of heart. I know it, and ask myself, Why am I here? For place? Yes, in your hearts. For money? Yes, for that of His own giving. For power? Yes, that of love and affection for His own people. And these I have, only as I am brought into spiritual identity with the One Shepherd of the Father's appointing. He knows where to find hungry lambs and sheep to feed, bruised ones to heal, weary ones to refresh, and burdened ones to bless with His own sweet peace. The One Shepherd is He of whom the Father spake, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd" (Zech. xiii.); and because of that awaking of the sword against Him, the ransomed sheep can sometimes sing, "JEHOVAH is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (Psa. xxiii. 1). When I am sluggish, I shall not want or lack a goad to quicken me. When I am wavering, I shall not want a nail to fasten me to Him. He is the Good Shepherd in redemption grace (John x. 11); He is the Great Shepherd in resurrection-power (Heb. xiii. 20); He is the Chief Shepherd in ascension-glory (1 Peter v. 4). When all His ransomed flock shall meet around His throne, they will praise and adore Him for ever and ever for the achievements of His grace, for all spiritual blessings which flowed through Him alone, and for the all-conquering power of His love.

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

## THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
APRIL 20TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a Merchantman, seeking goodly pearls:

"Who, when He had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that He had, and bought it."—Matthew xiii. 45, 46.

**T**HERE are characteristic chapters in God's most Holy Word which we can never forget, neither can we lose sight of the position they occupy in the records of Divine truth. Here we have a parabolic chapter, one of dark similitudes, obscure meanings, and of treasures hidden in the deep lying beneath the surface of Divine inspiration. We have also that glorious panorama of faith in Heb. xi., which none of us who are acquainted with God's blessed Word can ever forget. We may experience a little hesitancy sometimes in finding other portions, but we are sure about that. There is John vi., in which our Lord is described feeding the multitude with bread and fish which multiplied in the eater's hand, then dispensing to them the Bread of Life only to be hated by their natural mind. Carnal reason loathed and cast out such heavenly and spiritual provision. Who of us can forget that glorious chapter, John x., where the Good Shepherd is revealed feeding, leading, guiding, governing, and glorifying His flock? Neither can we erase from our memories that blessed seventeenth of John, where the Surety of the covenant, the Father's Righteous Servant is rendering a faithful account of His stewardship to Him who appointed Him, and in which account no discrepancy, want, or failure can be seen. All that a precious Christ undertook on behalf of His people He accomplished perfectly; I was going to say, to the very letter; for we find it was accomplished to the very word, or words. Listen to His declaration: "I have given unto

them the words which 'Thou gavest Me' (verse 8); and again, "I have given them Thy word" (verse 14). This was not only in sound and sign, but the Word of life in the power and spirit thereof. And who among us can fail to remember Psa. cvii., with its various stanzas describing the dealings of the LORD with His redeemed people, their gracious deliverances out of their distresses, His finding them just where they are, and bringing them by gracious lifts and sweet encouragements to Himself? The chapter before us is one of these characteristic portions of the sacred Scriptures, which from a child I have known and never could forget. The question arises, Why did the Lord Jesus Christ speak and teach in parables? No wonder the question should interest us when the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" Notice the answer Jesus gave: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Come to verse 34: "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." Our blessed Lord, as the Great Prophet of His Church, is still revealing the secrets of His Father's purposes of grace to the hearts of His people. Yes, by the grace, indwelling, and enlightening power of His blessed Spirit He declares things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. What are these secret things? God's elect and their whereabouts. These, being the persons for whom the blessings of the everlasting covenant were designed, must be sought for, found, and brought to light. The Spirit of Christ searches and finds the very persons upon whom God the Father fixed His everlasting love, whom the Son redeemed with His most precious blood, and who are the fruit of His sufferings and agonies. These are distinguished from the corrupt mass around them by the Spirit's indwelling, and His gracious witnessing of the Father's electing love and the Son's redeeming grace to them. He still speaks to them in parables, that gracious reciprocity and mutual enjoyment may exist between JEHOVAH and the members of His one family, according to that blessed declaration in 1 John i. 3: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." As we look through this chapter we find many portions which are puzzles and paradoxes to many of God's children who see not the truth in His light, and who have not been led into the spiritual apprehension of His mind and will contained in them. Ofttimes Satan seduces and beguiles by his false glosses and erroneous expositions of Scripture, thus hiding the fair beauty of inspired

truth from the gaze of those for whom it is designed ; but who must in the fulness of time, the set time of favour, be brought into the experimental possession of its blessedness.

It is ours for a short time to contemplate the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the parable which I have read for my text, and spoken by Him for the instruction of His disciples, and for the building up and establishing of His Church throughout all time. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a Merchantman, seeking goodly pearls : who, when He had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that He had, and bought it."

We will notice—

I.—THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

II.—THE MERCHANTMAN.

III.—THE SEARCH.

IV.—GOODLY PEARLS SOUGHT.

V.—ONE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE FOUND.

VI.—THE SALE—"Went and sold all that He had."

VII.—THE PURCHASE—"And bought it."

I.—THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. The parable commences, "Again, the kingdom of heaven." Why this word "*Again*?" Because the Lord Jesus Christ in patient grace will see to it that His communications and lessons shall be impressed upon the minds of His disciples. He repeats, ay, reiterates the same truths to meet the ignorance and infirmity of His scholars. We see this in that precious declaration in Mark x. 1 : "And, as He was wont, He taught them again." This mode of teaching is Divine, and is revealed under the old dispensation of law and in the new dispensation of grace. See Isa. xxviii. 13 : "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon line ; here a little, and there a little ; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." Here we see the effect of the precept being brought home to the heart by the power of God the Holy Ghost ; but, as we stand upon new covenant ground, we are not snared and broken by the *precept*, but counselled and comforted by the *promise*. Yes, blessed be God, led from the uncertain regions of cold legality, and standing upon the sure and certain ground of covenant love, we are taught and encouraged by promise upon promise. It is not the precept to tell me what I must do ; but the promise revealing to me the Father's mind, the accomplishment of that mind for me by the Son of His love, and the communication of it to my heart by His Spirit. In the mode of teaching appearing in the ministry of the apostles we see the very same thing. Paul discovers it to us in Phil. iii. 1 : "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." Peter was one in spirit and testimony with his beloved brother Paul, and writes thus, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of

these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance" (2 Epis. i. 12, 13). Again and again we see this revealed in the pages of Divine inspiration. It is said of the Master, "And, as He was wont, He taught them again" (Mark x. 1). As it was with the Master, so it will be with His disciples. He says in our text, "*Again.*" After giving many parabolic representations of the kingdom of heaven, He comes to the one before us and says, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a Merchantman." That expression, "the kingdom of heaven," is a characteristic of the Gospel by Matthew. It always refers to the real surrounded with the artificial, the genuine found in the midst of the counterfeit. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net containing good and bad fish." Mark! Bad as well as good fish in the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a field with tares sown in it as well as wheat. Do you see? Tares along with the wheat, the children of the devil mixing with the children of God in the kingdom of heaven. You have the same truth under the term "*heaven*" in the book of Revelation, which means the Gospel dispensation, from the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost to the ascent of the last elect vessel of mercy to glory. During this time the people of God will be scattered among the corrupt and reprobate mass of mankind. Here we find a solemn and heart-searching question for ourselves. In every congregation we may expect to find reprobates mingling with God's elect—unredeemed ones with God's redeemed—unregenerate sinners associating themselves with regenerate saints—dogs and swine assembling themselves with the lambs and sheep of Christ's flock. This is the question, Where are we individually this morning? Does this congregation answer to the description of the mixed multitude described throughout this chapter? Well may each of us ask the question, and that by the searching power of the Holy Ghost, "Lord, is it I?"

Throughout the Gospel by Matthew we see the Lord Jesus Christ revealed preaching to crowds. You see this at the commencement of Matt. v.: "And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth and taught them." The Gospel of John reveals the great Teacher dealing with individuals. The spirit of Matthew's Gospel is, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." The burden of John's Gospel is, "The kingdom of God is within you." The ministry of the Master, as set forth by the evangelist John, takes not into account hypocrites and outsiders. The spirituality of His teaching here is only for those in blessed and hallowed association with Himself. But see we not crowds in John's Gospel? Yes; but the Vindicator of His oppressed people soon scatters them. In chap.

ii. He is seen driving a crowd of worldlings out of the temple with a scourge of small cords. Come to chap. vi., and there you behold a great company feeding upon bread and fish; but loathing the spiritual provision He set before them, and scattered by its power. Come to chap. viii. Here you see a throng of scribes and Pharisees bringing to Him a poor outcast upon whom His affections were everlastingly fixed, accusing her of the sin of adultery. He stooped and wrote upon the ground, according to an ancient copy of the New Testament, "*the sins of every one of them.*" Be this as it may, they read upon the ground that which scattered them, and drove them from His sacred presence. Has a precious Jesus to do with crowds? He drives them from Him. Has He to do with the weak and retiring ones of His flock? He draws them to Him, and gently folds them to His bosom. Thus you see the distinction between the two expressions in Matthew and John. *The kingdom of heaven* presents to our view God's gracious work in the midst of earthly, corrupt, and carnal surroundings. *The kingdom of God* reveals God's gracious work as wrought by the power and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, which hypocrites and mere professors can never understand, but brought home to the hearts of reserved and retiring ones by Divine power. We come to notice,—

II.—THE MERCHANTMAN. Who is this Merchantman? Some have endeavoured to explain this parable as a sinner seeking Christ, but, according to my judgment, this is a perversion of God's truth. These see in the merchantman the individual sinner seeking goodly pearls of truth, pearls of grace, pearls of blessing, and at length finding and buying the Lord Jesus Christ the one pearl of great price. Now this will not do for me. Jesus Christ, God's salvation, is far above all price. The Merchantman is not a seeking sinner, for a seeking sinner is a bankrupt beggar. In the Adam fall he became a bankrupt. By the convincing and convicting power of the Holy Ghost he became a beggar. By the application of God's perfect, spiritual, and fiery law to his conscience, he was burnt out of house and home, and possesses nothing by which he can count upon the notice or favour of a just and holy God. Thus brought and taught, he experiences that state described in Toplady's matchless hymn:—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to **THYSELF** I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress,  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the Fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

Look through the Scriptures of truth for the description of the condition of those who are brought by rich and distinguishing grace to seek a precious Christ. Are these found as merchantmen with a stock-in-hand to do business on their own account?



Are these able to purchase God's salvation or gracious favour? Listen to the experience of one who was cared for by his loving Lord: "But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: Thou art my Help and Deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God" (Psalm xl. 17). Look at the declaration of our Lord Jesus Christ to Simon the Pharisee, who thought he had something with which he could buy or demand the favour, love, and mercy of God. "Jesus said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. *And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.* Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And He turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." She had nothing whatever to recommend her to the Saviour's notice, yet her sins were all forgiven. She had nothing to pay, yet she came into possession of the unsearchable riches of Christ. She deserved hell, but her Saviour brought her heaven.

We see this in the experience wrought in all the children of God as set forth in Romans iii. 19: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," or "*subject to the judgment of God.*" What is the judgment of God? That universal man is corrupt, depraved, bankrupt, dead, with nothing whatever to recommend him to the notice and favour of a sin-hating God. You may ask, Will all the world become subject to that judgment? I answer, Yes. All the elect will be graciously taught it by the Holy Ghost in this life, and all the reprobate will feel its power when before the throne of King Emmanuel's glory, when their boasting mouths will be stopped with His withering rebuke and final proof that they never wrought a good work during the whole course of their miserable existence, nor possessed the smallest coin that would pass current in His spiritual dominion. By this we see that the Merchantman of the text, according to the positive declarations of God's most Holy Word, and the experience of God's living children, cannot be a seeking sinner. He must be a seeking Saviour. We now notice,—

III.—THE SEARCH—"A Merchantman seeking." From Genesis to Revelation a seeking God is revealed as the glory of the Gospel. You may depend upon it, had it not been His good pleasure and delight to seek His people, they never would have sought Him; had it not been His determination to find, He never would have been found by one of those whom He brings into blessed and hallowed association with Himself. Let us look at the wonderful chapter, Genesis iii. Here we see Eve beguiled and fallen, and we see that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. ii. 14). Satan threw the dust of fleshly expectancy into the eyes of Eve, and blinded her to his designs, but Adam sinned with his eyes wide open. He sinned not like a dupe or a sneak; he sinned like a man. Why? Because he sinned out of fondest love to his wife, but for want of love to his God. You will see here a great disparity between the type and the Antitype. Adam was natural; Christ was spiritual. Adam was earthy; Christ was heavenly. Adam's way was from God; Christ's way was to God. Adam's will was unrestrained; Christ's will was in perfect subjection to that of His Father. When Eve stood in the midst of the ruin in which sin had plunged her, Adam forsook her not. He sinned with her, was lost with her, and before he would be parted from her, down to the depths of her doom and degradation he willingly plunged himself. In this we have a glorious type of the last Adam—our most glorious Christ. The first Adam parted with all that he had for the sake of his Eve. The last Adam left all He had for the sake of His bride—the Church. In this we see some little indication as to who the Merchantman is. When Adam discovered the plight he was in, he and his wife tried to hide themselves from the presence of God behind the trees of the garden. They hid, but God sought them; they ran, but not beyond His reach; they hid, but not beyond His gaze. His searching question, "Where art thou?" found out the guilty pair. The truth of Genesis iii. is not that these two sinners were set to seek their God, but that He sought them. Yes, a covenant God sought, found, and preached His Gospel to them. He gave the blessed assurance of His love by driving them out of an earthly Eden, to find their All in Him, and to hold spiritual communion and fellowship with Him.

You see the same searching God in the case of David. His is an awful state to contemplate. David sinned foully. He looked, he lusted, he fell. He caused Uriah to get drunk, and planned his destruction. How long remained he in his wandering state from God? So long, that if many of us were to see a poor weak child of God remaining in sin the same time, without satisfactory signs of repentance, we should come to the conclusion that he was wholly destitute of the life of God. But God loved David, and sent His servant Nathan, who spake to him the parable of the ewe lamb, by which the

Holy Ghost wrought conviction in his heart, bringing forth the bitter confession, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. xii. 1—13). In this narrative we see a sinner hiding in his sins, and a seeking and finding God. Now look at that *three-in-one* parable in Luke xv. In it the Good Shepherd is seen seeking His lost sheep, the woman seeking her lost piece of silver, and the Father seeking His lost son. This illustrates the love of the great Three-in-One to all the eternally-saved ones, without respect to their peculiarities or experiences. Blessed be God, our sins, follies, and changes can never affect His love and interest in us. This is sure to wound the conceit of those who pride themselves in high favours or deep teachings. If I am loved of my God, it is with the same love that He bears to the whole of His elect and redeemed family. In this blessed chapter we see the Good Shepherd going forth in search of His lost sheep, "*until He find it.*" He never stops short of that. "And when He hath found it, He layeth it on His shoulders," and carries it rejoicing all the way home to glory. The second part of the parable sets forth the finding of the lost silver. There is no life in silver, yet there is intrinsic value to the owner. A woman seeks it. Why is this? In the woman we see the Church, moved by the indwelling Spirit, declare the mind and will of God, and thus find lost elect ones in the most unlikely spots. It has been my lot to experience this joy of bringing precious souls, through the power of the Gospel, to the enjoyment of their perfection in Christ. In the last part of the parable the lost son is sought for and found. A great way off the Father saw him; the Father ran; the Father fell upon his neck; the Father kissed him. You see, all the activity is on the part of the Father. What a glorious sight! A seeking God! The Saviour seeking His lost sheep. The Spirit seeking His lost silver. The Sire seeking His lost son. I do love that precious declaration of the Saviour to the Samaritan woman, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Well might the Holy Ghost declare by Isaiah, "I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me" (Isa. lxxv. 1; Rom. x. 20).

IV.—GOODLY PEARLS SOUGHT.—What are pearls? White, shining, precious treasure found in the ocean. In the deep wide sea of this world the precious pearls of JEHOVAH are hidden until the time for their manifestation. In spots untraceable to human fishermen—that is, to Gospel ministers who are fishers of men—Christ seeks and finds His own. He holds the means in His own hands wherewith He brings them forth to light, life, love, and liberty in spiritual oneness with Himself.

What is the origin of the pearl? A distemper in the shell of the fish in which it is found. This cannot direct our minds to

our Lord Jesus Christ. There was no distemper in His origin—no defect in His Person or perfections. It leads us at once to contemplate the Church of the living God, those sinners whom He seeks and saves by His rich and sovereign grace from all distempers, washes from all sins, and carries them to glory to fill all heaven with unceasing praise and adoration. May we ever be kept humble before Him, remembering the hole of the pit whence we were digged, the rock from whence we were hewn, and the deep, dark sea of depravity from whence we were drawn. The sea is used by the Holy Ghost to illustrate the awful depravity of human nature throughout this wide world. See Isaiah lvii. 20, 21: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Out of this sea precious pearls are cast up at the command of Christ, and though they are surrounded with mire and dirt, they lose none of their value in His estimation. He came to seek, and seeking finds, and brings them to know something of their preciousness in Him and to Him, to share His grace down here, and at length be partakers of His glory up yonder. The members of the Church of Christ are as pearls in His eyes, goodly, beautiful, graceful, and comely.

V.—ONE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE FOUND.—Why goodly pearls, and then one pearl of great price? To set forth diversity and unity. I will not say uniformity. There may be uniformity where there is no unity. Blessed be God, there is unity where, according to our judgment and the sight of our eyes, there is no uniformity whatever. I thank God from the depths of my heart that I am spiritually one in His sacred and solemn presence with many who stand at a distance in outward things. Ay, and many stand aloof in respect to their experimental grooves, with whom we are unchangeably one in the glorious realities of the Gospel. This *one pearl* leads the mind to behold and admire the unity of the Church in Christ Jesus. The heavenly Bridegroom looks with "love's own thrilling gaze" upon that lovely one of whom He declares in Solomon's Song vi. 9: "My dove, My undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bear her." We see the diversity, yet oneness of the body of Christ set forth in the testimony of Paul, in Romans xii. 4, 5: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." And again, in 1 Cor. x. 17: "For we, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." Come to the 12th chapter and 12th verse: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ"—that is, Christ mystical, Head and members one glorious whole in the unceasing view of the Father. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be

Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." We see this diversity and unity in Ephesians iv. 3: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Then, after showing the nature and offices of the Christian ministry, he describes its design: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Now read at the 15th verse: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from which the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The Merchantman found this one pearl. Where did He find it? He found it in the purpose of the Father before the worlds were framed. In rendering an account of His stewardship He said to the Father, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: *Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me*, and they have kept Thy Word." Again, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." Now come to the 21st verse: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." There you see the one pearl of great price, a glorious Church standing in all the glorious perfections of its Husband and Head in the presence of the Father before all worlds. Good old John Kent sang so sweetly of this:—

"Then, in the glass of His decrees,  
Christ and His bride appeared as one;  
Her sin, by imputation, His,  
Whilst she in spotless splendour shone."

In time He found it in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness, for such this sinful world was to Him. We may murmur and complain, as we experience the desolations wrought by sin and Satan around us and in us; but we may rest assured, there never was desolation, isolation, or loneliness like

that experienced by our suffering Lord. From heaven's bright glory to earth's dark gloom He came to seek and to save His long-lost pearl. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death—that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." He sought, He found, He saved His pearl. By the power of the Holy Ghost, He finds it in the varied members of the one body whom He knits together in one glorious whole. This is beautifully expressed in one of the collects of the Church of England, "O Almighty God, who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Thy Son Christ our Lord." There you see spiritual oneness. The pearl lies hidden in the deep sea of human depravity and corruption, until found by the Merchantman, when, blessed be His name, He washes, cleanses, and purifies it in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, gives it to know that it ever appears before the face of the Father, clean every whit, and not one spot of sin, pollution, or depravity to be seen by His all-searching eye. We now come to notice—

VI.—THE SALE—The Merchantman "went and sold all that he had." Surely this cannot mean poor bankrupt beggars as we know and feel ourselves to be. What have we got to sell? What have we to dispose of? Nothing but that which deserves God's eternal wrath and condemnation. Am I a merchantman? A pretty merchantman! I am utterly ruined. Ofttimes my spirit bows in sadness before my God and cries:—

"Not on me, Lord, not on me,  
I am all iniquity;  
Look on Thine Anointed One,  
Who before Thy glorious throne,  
On His breast bears my poor name.  
All my load of sin and shame—  
Look on Him, my Surety."

In the Surety of the covenant I see the Merchantman. This is He who sold all that He had to purchase His Church, His pearl of great price. Turn with me to Phil. ii. 6—11: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Look at that glorious testimony of Paul in 2 Cor. viii. 9: "For

ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." He who was rich indeed parted with all that He had for His Church, His pearl. My dear friends, I might multiply Scripture proofs, but the time is gone. Look at that precious declaration in Matt. xx. 28: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Again, in Gal. i. 4: "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." Yes, He gave Himself, His life, His blood, His righteousness, His reputation, ay, *all that* He had. Devils tempted Him. Hypocrites persecuted Him. Pietists hated Him. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. liii. 7). Just think that this was all on your account and mine. Now turn to Isaiah xliii. 3, 4: "For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." Men and nations are as nothing to JEHOVAH-JESUS, and He tramples them under His feet, for the sake of His Church, His bride, His pearl.

VII.—THE PURCHASE—"And bought it." Look through the Scriptures, search them, and may God give you an intelligent understanding of this precious truth. I ask you on the ground of both Divine teaching and spiritual experience, when you hear persons speaking of Christ buying anything but His Church, do not believe them. I do not believe in purchased blessings, comforts, or mercies, for there are no such things. Christ purchased the Church to enjoy the blessings freely given to her in Him. In every portion of the New Testament, where He is said to buy, purchase, or redeem, the Church is the object. See! "The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts. xx. 28). "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. vi. 20). "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter i. 18, 19). "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. v. 9).

In this short parable we have a store of spiritual treasure. It will take eternity to explore it. May you and I so understand it here, as to be able to say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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M A R A H.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
APRIL 27TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore the name of it was called Marah.

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

"And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, *which*, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."—Exodus xv. 23—25.

IT is our blessed privilege to know that every portion of God's inspired Word is profitable for the instruction, correction, and establishment of His people at all times, and in all places. Every promise in this blessed Book points to the great and glorious Conservator of all spiritual blessings for His Church. Every type, sooner or later, unfolds or reveals the anti-type. In every portion of sacred history, it matters not how dry it may appear to us, a precious Christ waits to display the sovereignty of His gracious and righteous rule, to manifest the glory of His Father, and to endear Himself in the affections of His people for their establishment in grace and truth. Every proverb is a mystery to the proud professor, while it opens up spiritual light to the waiting hearts of anxious inquirers *after Him*. Speaking of the Scriptures, said Christ to the Pharisees, "they testify of Me" (John v. 39). "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded" to His doubting and unbelieving disciples "the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 27). There we see His patient grace in teaching *unbelieving believers*. You may rest assured God has many such among His children, who are treading the path of tribulation to that glory which He has so graciously prepared for them. It has pleased Him to leave on record by the pen of His servant Paul, that the journeyings of the Israelites in the wilderness were so many types of His people's experiences here below (see 1 Cor. x. 11). "Now, all these things happened unto them for ensamples," or *types*; "and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the



world are come." In Romans xv. 4, the apostle says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." In this portion he is calling upon those who are blessed with spiritual intercourse and identification with the meek and lowly Jesus, to learn of Him to bear patiently with the infirmities of the weak, and with the failures and falls of the feeble flock in the living family. He says, "We, then, that are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself: but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on Me." The Lord Jesus Christ pleased not Himself, and the more we are brought under His grace and guidance, the more His Spirit will be experienced in us, and manifested by us.

It is our lot this morning, trusting to the leading of the blessed Spirit, who wrote these things for the instruction, admonition, and edification of the Church, to seek to know our Father's will amid the painful and perplexing providences we are called to pass through. These we must have as sure as we belong to Him. We cannot avoid them. We may, and will try to get away from temptation and tribulation, but we find it an utter impossibility.

"Toil—trial—suffering still await,  
On earth, the pilgrim throng;  
Yet learn we in our low estate,  
The Church triumphant's song."

The declaration of the Holy Ghost in reference to the pathway of the scattered flock through the wilderness, is, "we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). It is not, *we may*, but, *we must*. Here we see the certainty of an entrance into the kingdom of God, and the certainty of the tribulation which ever attends it. Turn to Rev. vii. 13: "And one of the elders answered saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of *great tribulation*." Not small, trifling, or insignificant; but *great tribulation*. Do we belong to Him? Are we partakers of the hope of glory? Do we possess the faith of God's Christ? Do we rejoice sometimes in the blest assurance of an interest in His love? Then, as assuredly as we do, tribulation will and must be ours. Some of you whose hearts are buoyant through the possession of the comforts and enjoyments of this world, who have no lack of temporal mercies, and who take the bounties of your Father's providence from His gracious hands as though you had a right to them, may be ready to ask, Why weary us from time to time with the detail of trials and tribulations which only tends to despondency and despair?

Let me tell you, spiritual despondency and self-despair can do you no harm if you belong to Him. If His Word is made life and power in your heart's experience, you will bless Him for the pains of your pathway as well as for the peace of His presence. But, I grant you, that such declarations as these are contrary to our natural hopes and expectations. If God would but allow me to have my own way, I would make short work with affliction, suffering, and distress. I would not allow an ache, pain, or pang to come near this body. But they do, and will come. Blessed be His adorable name,

"All must come, and last, and end,  
As shall please my heavenly Friend."

They are all right, every one of them. I am brought oftentimes to sing, and God knows I do sing it with a melting of spirit, and gratitude of heart,

"Father, whate'er of earthly bliss,  
Thy sovereign will denies,  
Accepted at Thy throne of grace,  
Let this petition rise;—  
Give me a calm, a thankful heart,  
From every murmur free;  
The blessings of Thy grace impart,  
And let me live to Thee.

"Let"—

Ah! I can emphasize this with faith and feeling before Him—

"Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine  
My life and death attend;  
Thy presence through my journey shine,  
And crown my journey's end."

In true submission to His mind and will, my heart can sing this feelingly, and beg of Him to crown the end of my journey with lovingkindness and tender mercy, and bless me with an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We will now look at the portion I have read to you by way of text.

I.—In its connection. God had graciously blessed His ancient people Israel with deliverance from the oppression of Egypt. Deliverance from Egypt was a sure forerunner of disappointment at Marah. This chapter commences with a song of joy and rejoicing. Moses and the children of Israel sang with joyful hearts this song of triumph over enemies defeated, deliverance experienced, and promises performed. In looking through this song we find many precious declarations of JEHOVAH'S dealings with His elect and redeemed people. The second verse I have often read with a heart melted before my God. Look at it. "The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation; He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." Here I cannot help

addressing a word or two to the young in this congregation. It may be that in days to come, when my head lies beneath the sod, and my stammering tongue is no longer heard sounding forth the praises of Him who called me from darkness to His marvellous light, that you will remember these three words I have just read, "*My father's God.*" How many of you can look the author of your being in the face, and read many a tale of care, sorrow, and anxiety in those furrows wrought by time and grief, and acknowledge there *your father's God*? How many of you can see a father brought to bow before the glorious sovereignty of JEHOVAH, to acknowledge Him as the Controller of all his ways and the Director of all His paths? If such a favour should be yours, you will bless and praise the riches of God's grace that ever He caused these precious words to drop with sweet and solemn power into your heart, "*My father's God.*" Now look at verse 13: "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." Here we have not only a redeeming God, but a guiding God. Not a God delivering His people and then leaving them to blind chance; but going with them, preserving, sustaining, and carrying them safely to the place He had graciously designed for them near to Himself. Read ver. 17: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established." There we have glorious certainty, "Thou shalt bring them in." We have also a glorious spot, "the mountain of Thine inheritance," the Mount Zion which He loves, for which He has unceasing desire, and where He will rest and be eternally glorified. We have also a place of defence and devotion—"the sanctuary"—a place where JEHOVAH Three-in-One and One-in-Three will be worshipped and adored in spirit and in truth. Look at the conclusion of this song, "The LORD shall reign for ever and ever." Sovereignty is breathed in every sentence of it. The children of Israel rejoiced with Moses and Miriam in the contemplation of JEHOVAH'S glorious triumphs and their own gracious deliverance from bondage.

From the shore of the Red Sea they journeyed three days in the wilderness. Surely a purposing and promising God will manifest Himself in performing and providing. Yes, He will; but it must be in His own way, and at His own time. He tells us in Isa. lv. 8, 9: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." His thoughts are a great deep. In the contemplation of them, as far as He is pleased to reveal them to our spiritual understanding, we are lost in wonder and adoration. So was the apostle Paul when

He cried out, "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" We have the declaration of the written Word, and it is a very easy matter to quote it in proof of Divine sovereignty. I remember, in my younger days, I had a host of passages ready at hand to meet the objections of any Arminian or free-willer who might call into question the sovereignty and independence of JEHOVAH. But I have since been taught that it is one thing to see the truth written in the Word, and another altogether to have it written in my heart's experience. It is a vast and mighty privilege to be able to enter into the spiritual and hidden treasures of those words, "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" If there are depths, into them, in some measure, I must descend before I can have any spiritual and intelligent apprehension of them. Into the depths He has lovingly brought me to understand a little of His gracious dealings with the elect sons and daughters of men. I do not boast of my knowledge or attainments, and oftentimes the terrible question exercises my mind, Have my pulpit ministrations been merely talk? In the divisions of Reuben there are great searchings of heart. See! "Let Reuben live, and not die: and let his men be few" (Deut. xxxiii. 6). You may rest assured of this, where there are great searchings of heart, Reuben's men will be few. I know some of you are ready to say, Does not the passage read, "Let *not* his men be few?" Yes, it does; but if you turn to it, you will find the "*not*" is in italics. Why our translators put it there I cannot tell, for the men of the Firstborn, the men who excel in strength, the men in experimental union with God's Firstborn, are very few and far between.

After the song of victory the ransomed Israelites journeyed, no doubt with joyous spirits, to Shur, and found no water. This disappointment would naturally damp their ardour and change their songs to sighs. Such is the experience of that flock which God has redeemed and brings to Himself by the voice of the good, great, and gentle Shepherd, and by the power of the Holy Ghost. Disappointment is added to disappointment, trial to trial, temptation to temptation, to wean the soul from earthly things and satisfy it with God's fulness of grace and love which is in Christ Jesus. When God commanded the paschal lamb to be slain, its blood sprinkled upon the lintels and door-posts of the houses of Israel, and its carcass roasted, it was to be eaten with bitter herbs. As was the type, so is the antitype. So it is now with us who are blessed with the assurance of salvation and security beneath the blood of sprinkling. Look at that glorious declaration in Exodus xii. 13: And when you have appropriated the blood by faith? No! When you believe in the blood? No! When you trust in the blood? No! When *you see* the blood? No! But, "when I see the

blood, I will pass over you." The free-willer and free-worker will ask, Are you not going to give us some part or lot in the matter? Yes, just as much as the babe at the breast or in the womb had at that time. Bless God, the little ones were as safe as the father, who, as the priest of the family, had sprinkled the blood for their security. This teaches me that the little ones in grace who can scarcely lisp a single promise of God's blessed Word, the sick and sorrowful who can scarcely sigh out a longing or desire in Scriptural language, are as safe within the bounds of omnipotent and sovereign love, in the arms of a precious Christ, in the lap of eternal affection, as those who can sing loudly of JEHOVAH'S grace and favour. Mark! "And they shall eat the flesh in the night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs shall they eat it" (Exod. xii. 8). As assuredly as we have been brought by redeeming love into the sanctuary of God, to feed upon the provisions of His grace, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, and to feast upon His love, we shall also feed upon very bitter portions. With precious faith we shall experience accursed unbelief. With the intensity of spiritual desire for the company of our own Beloved we shall oftentimes mourn over the spirit of wretched indifference. Sometimes enjoying the sweets of everlasting love, and at other times plaintively crying, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" only to be met with blows from Zion's watchmen. Yes, it is painfully but profitably true, that with our Paschal Lamb we shall have our bitter herbs.

Now see how this is set before us in the call and regeneration of Saul of Tarsus. From the bright light of His glory, the Son of Man called unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" This is the most wonderful instance of spiritual regeneration we have recorded in the whole Book of God. There are those who are ever ready to define the exact way in which the Lord must bring His child from death unto life, and through grace to glory. I tell you plainly I cannot do it, for such a work is beyond my reach and apprehension. God reserves to Himself the right to know the particular experience and pathway of each of His children. One child He brings into His family through the South gate, and takes it home to glory through the North gate. Another He brings in at the North, and takes it home by the South. Another He brings into the rich experience of His love in the twinkling of an eye. Objector says, "That is not according to my experience." Be it so; but it was the experience of the thief upon the cross. Were you taught in so short a space of time as the three thousand upon the day of Pentecost? Indeed you were not, therefore it is utterly impossible for you to bind down all God's children to your line of experience. Such a course is but to limit the Holy One of Israel, because of which God has very serious and solemn reckonings with many of His people, yet He deals very graciously and tenderly with

them. In reading the account of the call of Saul, we see the truth which flowed from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was that of living and sympathetic union. "Why persecutest thou Me?"—that is, in the persons of My members. The Lord said to Ananias, who was afraid of Saul, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: *for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My sake.*" Thus Paul was brought into the enjoyment of his Saviour's love, and to the knowledge that he must suffer for His sake. We see the sweets and bitters of true spiritual experience revealed in 2 Cor. xii. 2—10. In one verse we see Paul high in the heights of covenant favour; in another he is low in a low place, praying for deliverance from the power of sin and Satan. In the heavenlies he hears rapturous words of grace and glory not possible for man to utter; amid the earthlies he experienced the rankling of the thorn in the flesh and the buffetings of the messenger of Satan.

II.—The words of our text describe the providential experience of ancient Israel, and typify the spiritual experience of the Israel of God during its pilgrim journey to the rest above. "And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water." A step, as it were, from the sweets of deliverance by the hand of a covenant God to the bitterest necessity that mortal can possibly experience. They "found no water." Have you ever been there spiritually and experimentally? Brought by a gracious God into the rich enjoyment of His redeeming love and delivering power, so that you are able to join with Paul, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. i. 12, 13). You shall also wander to spots where you will find no water. Yes, you shall know what it is to possess that spiritual blessing which is so contrary to poor human nature: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. v. 6). You must be brought to that spot of covenant favour so blessedly described in that precious portion, Isaiah xli. 17. Why do I call it precious? Because it has been made so to me many times. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Some of you may be seeking the water of grace and life in the sanctuary this morning, and have found the preacher a dry spring indeed. Some of you have been looking with anxiety, prayer, and supplication for the God of all grace to bless you with refreshing streams of life and love; but you are left cold, dry, barren, and, according to your judgment, lifeless. You have prayed until all power to pray is gone. Your spiritual

thirst is so intense that you know not what to pray for as you ought. Look at that! "Their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them." When all power to pray is gone; when the poor and needy are restrained and cannot express their wants, then the gracious Intercessor, who opens His mouth for the dumb, and pleads the cause of the poor, hears them, pleads for them, and blesses them with the fulfilment of His promise to them: "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." That is the way in which our blessed Redeemer reveals His kindness and His care.

The children of Israel were brought on their way to Marah. From a place of drouth to water. With eagerness they drink; they are disappointed; the water is bitter; drink it they cannot. This is a lively type of the many bitter disappointments God's children oftentimes experience in the journeyings through this wilderness world. Many of you know what that means in Revelation x. 9, 10: "And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter." This reminds me of the collect which we find at the beginning of some of our Bibles: "Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them." Sometimes we little think what we are praying for when the cry ascends for this inward digesting of Divine truth. When God's truth is eaten, the mouth is sweet. See Jer. xv. 16: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;" but Jeremiah frequently found that spiritual digestion was attended by very bitter experiences. Let us notice a few of the bitter things experienced by the children of God as they pass along their wilderness journey to that rest provided for them up yonder. Turn with me to Exodus i. 14: "And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour." This is a striking type, in which we see the spiritual Israel brought under the convicting power of God's holy, just, and fiery law. The law requires perfect, unvarying, spiritual, and inward obedience to all its commands, and entire conformity to all its demands. With the revelation of its requirements, helplessness is experienced. It was so fully in my case. I can sincerely enter into the depths of the apostle's declaration: "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." It is not, when I went to

the commandment, read it on tables of stone, or saw it in God's Book ; but when it came by the power of the Holy Ghost to my heart, sin revived, inability was experienced, I could not do the things that I would, I desired to yield the full tale of obedience, but the fearful words sounded in my ears : " Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them " (Gal. iii. 10). Gracious deliverance from this was mine when the Law-Fulfiller was revealed in the perfection of His obedience and Suretyship sufferings to my anxious, waiting heart. Now look at Exodus xvii. 8 : " Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." Amalek is a type of the flesh. The Israelites delivered from the bondage of the Egyptians now endured the attacks of the Amalekites. Am I delivered from the curse and condemnation of the law? It is to experience the bondage of corruption and the burden of the flesh. Remember this, as assuredly as you are delivered from the work of the law, it will be to experience the worry of the flesh. This is seen in the apostle's line of argument in Romans vii., but seen by very few. In the first part of the chapter he describes his bitterness under the bondage and burden, curse condemnation of the law. In the latter part he relates the conflict he experienced between the flesh and the spirit. No hypocrite or mere professor can understand the spiritual nature of JEHOVAH'S dealings with His people, or apprehend ought of the thorough badness and baseness of the flesh. Many have said concerning me, " That man goes too far ; he exaggerates in his statements of human depravity." Does he? No doubt he does according to the unscriptural notions of the dignity and excellence of human nature ; but, God knows, I do not exaggerate according to what I know of my own wretched nature in the light of JEHOVAH'S glory. By the teaching of the Holy Ghost every true-born child of God is taught to confess, " For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing ; for to will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good I find not." From the experience of this he cries in the bitterness of his soul, " O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? " See ! With the revelation of Christ in him the Hope of glory, he declares, " I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Mark you, this is future. It is through Jesus Christ our Lord I shall eventually be delivered from this body of death when the flesh goes down to corruption. and my ransomed spirit ascends to its native home and heaven. For this my heaven-born spirit longs, and sighs, and, blessed be God, such sighing is very sweet. Here I am reminded of a verse which was made very precious to my soul on Friday last, in the train, and which I could not resist quoting in a sick chamber, and again at our prayer meeting in the evening,—

" Soul that hast fled to Jesus, cease thy sighing ;  
'Tis Christ within thee seeks the Christ above ;



It is His Spirit with thy spirit crying.  
For clearer revelations of His love."

Precious truth! God in Christ enjoyed is the all in all of true Christian experience.

The law demanding and denouncing, and the flesh opposing and oppressing, are bitter things indeed. But these are not all to the living children of God. We see this in the experience of Hannah, as recorded in 1 Sam. i. She knew the truth of Solomon's words, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Prov. xiii. 12); and, "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy" (Prov. xiv. 10). Hannah prayed in bitterness of soul to her God. Eli noticed her lips moving, but heard not her words. He thought she was drunken. She meekly met the charge of drunkenness, "and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit" (margin, *hard of spirit*); I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink: but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." From whence arose this bitterness of soul? From hope deferred, prayers unanswered, petitions unheeded, and from the sore provokings of her bitterest adversary. How many of us know what it is to carry unanswered petitions again and again to the throne of grace? We pray over and over again for the revelation of Himself to our waiting hearts, and to see His power and glory so as we have seen it in the sanctuary (Psa. lxxiii. 1, 2); but we receive no answer. We are like that poor dog of a woman who left a devil in her house and begged for the help of her only Deliverer, "*but He answered her not a word*" (Matt. xv. 23). Tell me, Is such an experience as that sweet to you? No! It is bitterness itself. You long for the joy of His presence; but the dreariness of desertion is yours. You long for His loved embrace, and you experience the very hug of the devil. You sigh for the light of His countenance; but you remain in the darkness of spiritual desertion. You groan to enjoy the sweets of His salvation; but the bitterness of sin is felt in all you do, ay, and it is bitter for you to know that all you do is sin.

Bereavement is a bitter ingredient in the pilgrim's cup. You see this in the case of Naomi. There is something so precious in that entreaty of Ruth when Naomi requested her to leave her: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth i.). It is very blessed when we are able to say *that* spiritually and experimentally to a precious Christ. Naomi had lost her husband and her two sons: "And it came to pass when they"—Naomi and Ruth—"were

come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." Some who are now soaring in the heights of covenant favour may find fault with Naomi for her complaining. I do not. I know it is part of the pathway of every child of God. Let death cast its dark shadow over any member of your family, over a child near and dear to your heart, over the nearest and dearest object of your affection, and will that be sweet to you? There are two or three in this place this morning who know little or nothing of the anxiety, grief, and bitter importunity my heart has experienced with God on their behalf, that He would spare the life which seemed to hang upon a thread. Yes, death is bitter to the heart of the living child of God when He who is the Resurrection and the Life seems far away. The rumbling of the wheels of His chariot of love may be heard in the distance, and instead of deliverance, disappointment is experienced in the soul.

Talk about bitters! Look at the experience of our old friend Job. Turn to his third chapter, verse 20: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?" I have asked the question many times, How is it that life has been given to me that I should experience so much bitterness of soul because of the absence of Him I love, and the presence of him I hate? I desire His salvation, yet mourn over sin's power in me. I long for rest in the bosom of my Beloved, yet groan beneath the buffetings of the evil one. "Which long for death, but it cometh not: and dig for it," mentally and spiritually, "more than for hid treasures." Why is this allowed? or, Why was it ordained? That God might display the riches of His grace in the deliverance of His child from every spot and experience of bitterness. Now turn to the thirteenth chapter, verse 23, where Job declares the sovereignty of JEHOVAH in the bitterness he experienced. "How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin." I do not think Job prayed that prayer a second time. I cannot pray it all. I do not wish for God to show me my transgression and my sin. To know their number would crush me. I know too much of them in this pulpit for my comfort and happiness. "Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and holdest me for Thine enemy?" He had unwittingly asked God for this very experience. If I see my iniquities, sins, and transgressions, the face of my God must be hidden from me. "Wilt Thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt Thou pursue the dry stubble? For Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." He asked for all this, and now mourns over it in the bitterness of his soul. Look at another case of bitterness in the experience of Job. "Even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning.

Oh that I knew where I might find Him." The bitterness of Job's complaint arose from the absence of the loved one of his heart. Turn to his twenty-seventh chapter, verse 2: "As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty who hath vexed my soul," or, "*made my soul bitter.*" Job acknowledges his God in all his ways, bitter as well as sweet. Hezekiah was no stranger to these things. He says, "What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it; I shall go safely all my years in the bitterness of my soul. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness." My God has done all this by crossing me in my purposes, thwarting my plans, blighting my hopes, and thus weaning my heart from earthly, sensual, and devilish things, that I may find my all in Him and in Him alone.

It is a blessed privilege to lose the taste of the bitters in the enjoyment of the sweets. When the people murmured against Moses, he cried unto the LORD. This was the very best thing for him to do. "And the LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." A tree! This leads our minds to the "Apple tree among the trees of the wood," even the Father's Beloved, and the Church's Beloved, under whose shadow we delight to sit down and find His fruit sweet to our taste. What is His fruit? His suretyship sufferings, His precious blood, His perfect obedience, His prevalent intercession. A tree. The Tree of Life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations of the saved (Rev. xxii. 1, 2). Yes, it is the Tree of Life which is the desire of every living soul. The Desire cometh, a Tree of Life (Prov. xiii. 12). Then, to the hungry soul all bitter things are turned to sweetness (Prov. xxvii. 7). When Christ, the Tree of Life, appears, in the midst of the bitter waters of affliction, sorrow, trial, temptation, and tribulation, we delight to sip at the sweet waters which flow so gently around us, and rejoice to find that instead of hateful sin we have full salvation, our mourning is turned to joy, our darkness to light, our bitters to sweets. We glory in the blessed assurance of life through His death, of pardon through His precious blood, justification through His perfect righteousness, acceptance through His all-prevalent intercession, and the perfection of grace and glory in His adorable person.

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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THE LAMB AND HIS COMPANY.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
MAY 4TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads.

"And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.

"And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."—Rev. xiv. 1—3.

IT is a blessed privilege to be able to sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also, that glorious hymn of old John Kent's, with which we commenced this morning's service.\* It is an unspeakable mercy to experience spiritual oneness with the company described therein, and to know, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that we have a place and a position upon Mount Zion, in union with the Lamb, utterly unknown to the world, into the enjoyment of which formalists, Pharisees, and mere professors can never enter.

It is our lot this morning, in humble dependence upon the gracious guidance of the glorifier of the Father's Christ, to seek a little instruction, comfort, and edification from the portion I have read by way of text in its connection down to the end of the 5th verse. There we have a marvellous unfolding of Divine truth, upon which those who are spiritual among us love to feed; a precious revelation of select society in the midst of which we desire to be found, and a glorious description of consecrated ground, which many of us are sometimes privileged to tread.

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\* See hymn on page 280.

We will look at the subject according to the following arrangement,—

I.—THE RESERVE—The Lamb and His company.

II.—THEIR REJOICING—“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.”

III.—THEIR REGENERATION—“And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders.”

IV.—THEIR REDEMPTION—“And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

V.—THEIR RESTRAINT—“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.”

VI.—THEIR RECTITUDE—“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.”

VII.—THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS—“And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

I.—THE RESERVE—“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads.” The first words of this gracious revelation of God's mind sets forth the diligence with which His child seeks for fresh unfoldings of His mind and will concerning His people. John had been blessed with a glorious revelation of God's Christ, according to the description given in the first chapter, where he says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. And I turned to see the voice that spake unto me. And being turned I saw seven golden candlesticks. One like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.” He then gives a glorious description of the mediatorial perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ and the overpowering effect the sight had upon him. “And when I saw Him,”—that very One upon whose breast he had leaned at supper, with whom he had held gracious intercourse, and had been blessed with hallowed familiarity; the sight of Him in His exaltation was so glorious that, as John states, “I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not: I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen.” Now if you look throughout this Book of Revelation you will find John looking again and again. It matters not if he be sent down into the deep like Jonah, and shut out from the presence of His God, he will look and look again. If he be on the mount of covenant favour, rejoicing in the blessed experience of the love, compassion, and sympathy of His risen Lord, he looks again.

"And I looked, and, lo." The sight was astonishing and astounding to the spiritual apprehension and understanding of John. "A Lamb stood on the Mount Sion." In every portion of this book of Revelation where the word "Lamb" occurs, it appears as a diminutive, meaning "a little Lamb," in contrast to the great wild beast. Yet He appears in His glorious sovereignty in the midst of the throne. Turn to chapter v. 6: "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Here we see the Lamb, small in the eyes and estimation of men, but everything in the eye and heart of His Father. "He was," and is "despised and rejected of men," yet He is in the midst of the throne reigning and ruling over all men, events, and circumstances. Though men say, "We will not have this Lamb to reign over us," they cannot live, or move, or have their being independently of Him. Why this mysterious disparity? That His hidden and inquiring disciples may be taken by Him into a desert place, privately, and enjoy the sweet revelation of these things which He withholds from others. Through a never-ending eternity He will appear before His ransomed and adoring worshippers as the meek and lowly One who, in the days of His flesh, learned how to sympathise with them in all their afflictions, infirmities, and necessities. You can see Him revealed thus in various portions of God's blessed Word. Look, for instance, at Matthew xxv. 31, where He is described as coming in His glory, with all the holy angels, and sitting upon the throne of His glory to dispose of all nations according to His sovereign will and good pleasure. The title given Him here is not, God, or the Son of God; but "*the Son of Man*." "When the Son of man shall come in His glory;"—all the glory with which He was invested as Mediator of the covenant before all worlds. Glorious sight! The Son of Man, and yet the Son of God. The lowly Man, and the mighty God in one person. Why is this? For the confronting and confounding of all His people's foes, and for the comfort, consolation, and encouragement of all those who in union with Him are despised and rejected of men. We oftentimes derive sweet encouragement from the blessed truth that He who at this very moment fills the throne of the universe is Man as well as God. Hart beautifully expresses this glorious fact,—

"A Man there is, a real Man,  
With wounds still gaping wide,  
From which rich streams of blood once ran,  
In hands, and feet, and side.

His human heart He still retains,  
Though throned in highest bliss,  
And feels each tempted member's pains—  
For our affliction's His."

He is the glorious Man who understands all the aches, pains, infirmities, ignorances, wants, necessities, sufferings, and sorrows of His poor pilgrim people here below. He is the Man who was in all points tempted like unto them, yet without sin. He is the Man who will succour all His tempted ones in the wilderness, and will come in His glory to present all His jewels of election-love to the Father, perfect and complete in Himself. He is the God-Man who will be crowned with glory and honour before assembled worlds, when the Father will acknowledge the perfection of His service in the preservation, salvation, and glorification of every sheep and lamb committed to His care before the worlds were framed. But this will not be all. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. vi. 2). They shall sit with Him in His throne, and unite with Him in that awful denunciation, "Depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). And as the smoke of the torment of the lost rises up for ever and ever, "the four-and-twenty elders, and the four living creatures fall down and worship God that sits upon the throne, saying, Amen, Alleluia" (Rev. xix. 3, 4). Yes, eternal praises for His judgments, as well as for His mercies, shall ascend to JEHOVAH from the rejoicing hearts of all His glorified ones before His throne.

*"And, lo, a Lamb."* Peter speaks of this blessed One, as, "a Lamb without blemish and without spot: who, verily, was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for *all* who by Him do believe in God" (1 Peter i. 19—21). He was the Lamb of the Father's choice and appointment, in whom no flaw or defect could ever be found. He was given as a sacrifice for His people; and of Him His true worshippers can sing, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast; not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). Pray, why did God choose to reveal His dear Son under the figure of a lamb? To set forth in a pre-eminent manner His innocence, meekness, gentleness, kindness, compassion, and love. There is no creature of God's forming so harmless and inoffensive as the lamb. It will receive injuries, but will inflict none. Its fleece clothes the naked. Its flesh feeds the hungry: in life and death it is highly prized. In all these points we see the Lamb of God set forth for our clothing, food, and delight. In His righteousness, the obedience of His sinless life, we are clothed, and we rejoice to know that His "flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed." "Without spot or blemish" the Lord Jesus Christ ever stands in the eye of the Father. In Him all the perfections of grace and glory shine, and all these are made over to all those who are blessed with eternal identification with Him. We see this in that testimony of Paul in 1 Cor. vi. 17, "But he that is

joined to the Lord is *spiritually one with Him*." Then, all the Lamb was in covenant for them before the worlds were framed, all that He did for them during His sojourn here upon earth, and all that He is in the Father's estimation in glory, shall be theirs in spiritual possession throughout the countless ages of eternity. It is all of His grace that we know that not all the anxieties, cares, and perplexities experienced by the elect, not all the transgressions, sins, and iniquities they commit, nor the sorrows, sufferings, and tribulations they endure can ever affect the estimation in which they are held by the Father's eternally loving heart.

Having accomplished His redeeming work, triumphed over His people's enemies, and presented to His Father a spotless righteousness for them, the Lamb is graciously pleased to bless them with spiritual association, fellowship, and intercourse with Himself. Far above all terrestrial things He has ascended, and having asserted His dominion and sovereignty over all things in heaven, and earth, and hell, He reveals Himself as the Victor over all the foes of His redeemed flock. Turn to the chap. xvii. 14: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Who are these enemies of the Lamb? Those who are occupied with earthly grandeur and pomp, have the Czar, the Sultan, and the Pope ever in their eyes; but we are taught to look nearer home. These, with all their pomp and splendour surrounding them, all the riches and affluence at their command, all the dominion and majesty they can boast of, are three of the most miserable wretches outside hell's gates. But it is not for me to be looking at carnal things like these. Throughout the metaphors of this Book I see spiritual truths abounding. In the friends of the Lamb I see my friends, in His foes I see my foes. In this portion I see Infidels, Jews, Turks, Papists, Socinians, and Arminians, with Satan at their head, making war with the Lamb. Abel's death was not so much the act of Cain against his brother as it was the act of Satan against God's Christ. All the persecutions which have raged against the Church from Abel's days to the present, have been aimed at the Head through the members, and as assuredly as the Christ of God is exalted in your affections and mine, as assuredly as His name is known in your house and mine, as assuredly as His love is felt in your heart and mine, Satan and his armies will make war against Him in us. Are we spiritually one with Him? His sufferings will abound in us, but our consolations will abound by Him. Do His enemies molest us? Blessed be His name; "the Lamb shall overcome them." I love that declaration, "The Lamb," not "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah," shall overcome them. The precious truth set before us in this metaphor is, that love is ever the greatest conqueror. There is no victory appears so glorious and magnanimous



as that of gentleness in union with a precious Christ. If the children of the living God did but know the privileges which are theirs "in union with the Lamb," and their high calling of God in Christ Jesus, they would never resent insult with injury, nor persecution with petulance, but in patience they would possess their souls, and leave their foes to be dealt with by Him. The meek, the lowly, the kind, and gentle Lamb will overcome every enemy of His people. In my dealings with those who oppose me I can take no credit to myself. Am I patient? It is the patience of Christ in me. Am I gentle? It is the gentleness of Christ shown by me. Am I loving? It is the love of Christ constraining me. The love of Him who is "Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

"*Lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion.*" What is this Mount Zion? We read of Zion, the stronghold which David took as a refuge for the halt, the blind, the lame, and the maimed who were with him. In this we see a glorious type of the Church of God. In every portion of the Old Testament where Zion is mentioned, we have something of the blessedness of the Church described. See Joel ii. 32: "In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call." See this fulfilled in Acts ii. 16—21. Turn to Obadiah 21: "And saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S." Fulfilled in 1 Tim. iv. 16. The New Testament is the key which unlocks, unfolds, and reveals the truths hidden in Old Testament types, shadows, and metaphors. See how God's Zion, God's Church, is set before us in Psalm cxxii. 13, 14: "For the LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Here I can see nothing but the salvation and security of elect and redeemed people of God. When I read, "The LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people trust in it," or "*betake themselves unto it*" (Isaiah xiv. 32), I know that this is the Church of the living God. When I read in Psalm cxxiii. 3, "For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore," I am persuaded it is the Church of the Firstborn. When I read in Psalm ii. 6, "Yet have I anointed My King upon My holy hill of Zion," I see there the elect and redeemed people of God with Christ in their midst as God's anointed Prophet to counsel, guide, and instruct, God's anointed Priest to atone, intercede, and bless, and God's anointed King to reign over and in them by the power of the Holy Ghost. We are not left in doubt as to the truth of these things, for Paul appears to clear away all that may be vague and uncertain, and says, "But ye are come." Where from? From the darkness and gloom of Sinai to the light and glory of Ziou. From condemnation and death to

justification and life. From distance and desertion to the joys of God's presence and the smiles of His countenance. "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels to the general assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 22—24).

Here, upon Mount Zion, upon consecrated ground, a select company appears. The delight and glory of this favoured company is the Lamb as it had been slain. As the redeemed stand, worshipping, and adoring Him, they have not only a reciprocity of enjoyment, but mutual possession of the privileges and immunities which the Father has conferred upon them in the Son of His love. Look at their number. "*An hundred and forty and four thousand.*" A definite number given to set forth an indefinite. This is given not so much in reference to the whole Church of the living God as to that portion of it, saved, redeemed, called, regenerated, and perfected "in union with the Lamb" up to the close of the Jewish dispensation, or God's elect amongst the Jews. You see the same number mentioned in chapter vii. 4—8: "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." Come to verse 9: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number." Elect Jews and Gentiles, "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." At your leisure read from the end of this seventh chapter to the commencement of the fourteenth, and you will find a record of the afflictions, persecutions, and privations experienced by the remnant, the one hundred and forty and four thousand, yet, according to the words of our text, not one is wanting. Let Satan hurl his fiery darts against the Church, not one member thereof shall be lost. Let earth and hell combine against the elect of God, not one of them shall be hurt or destroyed; not one of them shall be wanted in that glorious day when JEHOVAH-JESUS shall reckon up His jewels of election love. In His mind the number of them is

definite, but in the minds of finite beings they form "a great multitude which no man can number."

*"Having His Father's name written in their foreheads."* What does this indicate? Property, peculiarity, and preciousness. In ancient times the commander of hosts branded his soldiers in the forehead that they might be known and distinguished from all others. In our days the possessor of silver plate and valuables has his own mark engraved upon them. Why? To distinguish them as his own personal property. So the whole company of the redeemed receive JEHOVAH'S mark to signalise them as His own peculiar and precious property. They are His by sovereign decree, creation, power, redemption price, and regeneration grace. They are a peculiar people to Him, and He is a God peculiar to them. He teaches them by His Spirit that they shall have none other God but Him. To them He makes an old covenant command a new covenant reality. The Father's name is seen in their foreheads where it can be seen, acknowledged, and feared. Is the name of the Father seen in your foreheads? Does a child-like spirit appear in your daily experience? You remember the inscription upon the crown of the Jewish high priest, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Mark you, I say crown, not mitre. I do not like the term mitre. I will tell you why. I was staying with a dear old rector the other day, when he showed me a letter he had received from a would-be bishop. On the corner of the letter was the bishop's crest, a mitre. My heart sighed, "Poor fellow, the mark of the beast is upon him." I said to my dear old friend, "Do you remember giving me some few years ago a little picture representing the origin of the bishop's mitre?" "I do," said he, "I wish you would ask John to copy a few of them for me." John has copied them, and off they are gone. What is the origin of the bishop's mitre? If you can, consult Hislop's "Two Babylons," Sixth Edition, page 350, where the writer says, "As the Pope bears the keys of Janus, so he wears the mitre of Dagon. The excavations of Nineveh have put this beyond all possibility of doubt. The Papal mitre is entirely different from the mitre of Aaron and the Jewish high priests. That mitre was a turban. The two-horned mitre, which the Pope wears when he sits on the high altar at Rome and receives the adoration of the cardinals, is the very mitre worn by Dagon, the fish-god of the Philistines and Babylonians. There were two ways in which Dagon was anciently represented. The one was when he was depicted as half-man, half-fish, the upper part being entirely human, the under part ending in the tail of a fish. The other part was, when, to use the words of Layard, 'the head of the fish formed a mitre above that of the man, while its scaly, fan-like tail fell as a cloak behind, leaving the human limbs and feet exposed.' Of Dagon in this form Layard gives a representation in his last

work, which is here represented to the reader ; and no one who examines his mitre, and compares it with the Pope's, as given in Elliott's 'Horse,' can doubt for a moment that from that, and no other source, has the pontifical mitre been derived. The gaping jaws of the fish surmounting the head of the man at Nineveh are the unmistakable counterpart of the horns of the Pope's mitre at Rome. Thus it was in the East at least five hundred years before the Christian era." This is true, and yet we have those who think they can stem the tide of Popery and Ritualism by mean of such tomfoolery. There must be something spiritual, unknown to the world and its men, to stem the tide of error, superstition, and idolatry. Nothing but God the Father's name, revealed in the person of the slain Lamb by the power of the Holy Ghost will avail for the confronting and confounding of the hosts of hell. The redeemed have the Father's name in their foreheads. It is not the name of Churchman, nor Reformed Episcopal Churchman, nor Baptist, nor Independent, nor Presbyterian. My dear friends, all these names must go to the place from whence they came. They sprang from the flesh, and with the flesh they must perish. But here we have a name which all bear in union with the Lamb. In this name is seen the truth borne upon the crown of the high priest, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Every elect and redeemed sinner must be separated to the Lord, distinct with the Lord, and distinguished by the Lord. O what a mercy it is to know that wherever we go it is by Him, for Him, and with Him. To know that all I am spiritually before my God in Christ, makes a clean sweep of all sectarian differences and denominational distinctions, and brings me, as a living child of God, into sweet fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

II.—THEIR REJOICING—"And I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." "A voice from heaven." What is it? It can be nought but the voice of God, and those in blessed and eternal association with Him. It was "as the voice of many waters." Why the figure of water here? To show forth the might and power of those spiritual blessings which abound in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in this new covenant dispensation. These are living waters which flow forth from Jerusalem above, from the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is blessedly set forth in the words of dear old John Kent :

"Beneath the sacred throne of God  
I saw a river rise,  
The streams were peace and pard'ning blood  
Descending from the skies.  
Angelic minds cannot explore  
This deep unfathom'd sea;  
'Tis void of bottom, brim, or shore,  
And lost in Deity."

These waters communicate life wherever they flow, according to Ezekiel's glorious description of them in New Testament times (Ezek. xlvii. 1—12). This is the water which, if a man drink he shall live for ever, as the Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). The text speaks of "*many waters*." These set forth the innumerable blessings, bounties, and benefits flowing from Christ by His Gospel to the varied members of His one body. Here we see the diversity and unity of truths. It is not the same portion of the Word of Truth that arrests all the children of God. The regeneration truth, in my case, may not be that of any member of this congregation. God has a word appointed for the quickening and ingathering of each of the lambs and sheep of His flock. For instance, one hears these words, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," and life in the experience of conviction and condemnation is communicated. Another hears the words, "The just shall live by faith," as in the case of Martin Luther, who heard these words, and from that very moment the life was manifested in him. Another hears the glorious truth, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," and life eternal is graciously experienced. You will see this fact set forth in No. 13 of *Grove Chapel Tracts*, entitled, "It is God that Justifieth; or, An Evening with the Little Flock in Ancient Rome." The tract describes the various phases of Divine justification, and the sovereignty of JEHOVAH displayed in the different portions employed in bringing His children to a knowledge of their standing in Christ Jesus. In 1 Cor. xii. we see the many waters of Divine grace, love, and mercy flowing through the various channels of the Spirit's appointing, the different ministers whom He qualifies and commissions to sound forth the blessings of the covenant, and the abounding grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that which worketh all in all."

"*And as the voice of a great thunder.*" Job asks the question, "The thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job xxvi. 14). Look at the glorious description given of JEHOVAH'S goings forth for the salvation of His people in Hab. iii. 4: "And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power." The voice of JEHOVAH is described by thunder. Why? As a power to wake the dead, rouse the sluggish, and bring His people into loving association with Himself. You see this in one of the most magnificent descriptions of a thunder storm to be found in the English language, and given in Psa. xxix. 3: "The voice of the

LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth; the LORD is upon many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon He maketh them also to skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire." This, no doubt, has reference to the cloven tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost. "The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness: the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh." He will bring His own into many a wilderness, where they shall experience a shaking from earth and earthly things. Into desolate spots a precious Christ shall allure His bride, from whence He will give her vineyards of precious fruits and make the valley of Achor, or confusion, a door of hope. "The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve," or, "*to be in pain.*" These are the hinds of the resurrection morning, the true Naphtalis who are let loose from the curse and dominion of sin, and satisfied with favour (Gen. xlix. 21; Deut. xxxiii. 23). They have felt the pangs of spiritual birth, and oftentimes endure the pains of godly sorrow and heartfelt repentance. Yes, "The voice of the LORD maketh His hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests; and in His temple doth every one speak of His glory," or, "*every whit of it uttereth His glory.*" Every part of God's spiritual temple, however insignificant or hidden from view any portion may appear, shall speak of His glory and show forth His praise. Each stone in the building shall hear that glorious voice which called Lazarus from his grave, quickened into life the widow's son at the gate of Nain, and restored the lifeless corpse of the ruler's daughter to life and vigour.

"*And I heard the voice of harpers harping on their harps.*" Not only peals of Almighty thunder to shake election jewels out of earth's vile dross; but soft, sweet strains of love, grace, compassion, and pity to gladden the hearts of JEHOVAH'S contrite ones. David's delight was to play upon his harp, by which the evil spirit was allayed in Saul. Allusion is made to this playing in Psa. xcii. i. 3: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High. To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night. *Upon an instrument of ten strings*, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound." I remember one day being in company with dear old William Garrard, the watchman on the walls of Zion, when he said, "Ah, my boy, I want to have a bit of talk with you about the instrument of ten strings that David speaks of. Do you see David there? I see a greater than David. David's playing produced harsh and discordant sounds. He was a poor hand at that work. I can see David's Lord, JEHOVAH'S best Beloved, performing upon that instrument of ten strings, God's holy, just, and righteous

law, and producing therefrom sweet harmonious sounds which delighted the heart of His Father and fill my soul with rejoicing. All through His lifetime upon earth until He cried, 'It is finished,' He played upon that instrument for me. O, my dear boy, that glorious music, soft and sweet, the imputed righteousness of my Lord, soothes all my sorrows, chases away my fears and gives me peace and joy in believing." That was music indeed to my soul. You may depend upon it I listened in silence to the dear old watchman's pouring forth of these glorious truths. It is of God's rich mercy that we find our notes of Gospel music sweetly harmonising with those of the Lamb and His redeemed company upon Mount Zion. Here we can sing, "My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day: for I know not the numbers thereof. Thy righteousness, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto Thee" (Psa. lxxi. 15, 19). It is our blessed privilege to claim our standing with the Lamb and His company upon Mount Zion, reserved by His Father's grace, rejoicing in Him alone, redeemed by His blood, restrained by His love, and at last to behold His face in righteousness, satisfied with His likeness.

The time is gone. Next Sunday morning, if the Lord be pleased, we will have another look at this blessed portion of His Word.

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#### HYMN.

ON Zion's glorious summit stood  
A numerous host redeemed by blood;  
They hymned their King in strains Divine,  
I heard the song and strove to join.

While everlasting ages roll,  
Eternal love shall feast their soul;  
And scenes of bliss, for ever new,  
Rise in succession to their view.

Here Mary and Manasseh view,  
The dying thief, and Abraham too;  
With equal love their spirits flame—  
The same their joy, their song the same.

O sweet employ, to sing and trace  
The amazing heights and depths of grace;  
And spend, from sin and sorrow free,  
A blissful vast eternity.

O what a sweet exalted song,  
When every tribe and every tongue,  
Redeemed by blood, with Christ appear.  
And join in one full chorus there.

My soul anticipates the day,  
Would stretch her wings and soar away,  
To aid the song, a palm to bear,  
And bow—the chief of sinners—there.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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REGENERATION, REDEMPTION, RESTRAINT,  
RECTITUDE, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
MAY 11TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

"And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God."—Rev. xiv. 4, 5.

**H**UMBLY seeking the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, I endeavoured last Sunday morning to direct your attention to the precious truths set before us in the first and second verses of this chapter. My heart and my mind were then too expectant, for heavenly provision seemed to multiply, and instead of being able to get through the points I enumerated, I could speak only of the RESERVE, the associates of the Lamb upon Mount Zion, and their REJOICING in blessed and hallowed oneness with Him. It is our privilege this morning, depending upon the same grace, to seek for instruction in the various particulars which present themselves in the three successive verses.

III.—THE REGENERATION set forth in the new song of the Lamb's associates upon Mount Zion.

IV.—THEIR REDEMPTION—"The hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb."

V.—THEIR RESTRAINT—"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins."

VI.—THEIR RECTITUDE—"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

VII.—THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS—"And in their mouth was



found no guile : for they are without fault before the throne of God."

III.—THE REGENERATION set before us in the new song of the Lamb's associates upon Mount Zion. A new song only to be sung by new creatures in Christ Jesus. This leads our minds to that declaration of Paul in 2 Cor. v. 17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new." Not only are new things brought up in their heart's experience, but old things become new to them upon new covenant ground. They possess a new heart of God's own giving, according to His precious promises found interspersed throughout the Old Testament. See Ezek. xxxvi. 26 : "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." This is called *one heart* in Jer. xxxii. 39 : "And I will give them *one heart*, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them." Why the heart and not the head ? Because the heart is the seat of the affections. This teaches me that a child of God, brought by the grace and indwelling of the ever-blessed Spirit into an intelligent apprehension of the mind and will of God, is not a cold Christian or an icy Calvinist. Such I ignore altogether. In fact, I could not live spiritually and in harmony with such company. Only those in whose heart God's covenant love has been shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, and who have been brought into the enjoyment of the covenant affections and sympathies of the Christ of God, will suit the cravings of that nature which He has so graciously engrafted within me. My soul blesses and praises Him for that word given to us in Psalm lxviii. 6 : "God setteth the solitary in families." But I like the Prayer Book version which my soul clings to ; it may be through the force of early association. "This is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house." One heart, one mind, one spirit, and one way in union with the great and glorious covenant Head up yonder, and communicated by the one Spirit to the members of the one family. These enjoying JEHOVAH'S exceeding great and precious promises in the Divine nature (2 Peter i. 4) cannot help but sing praises unto Him. The heart that experiences the blessedness of God's saving and redeeming love must rejoice and be glad. But mark ! The singing we have set before us in our text is vastly different to that which is produced by a highly-trained choir. It is not the vociferation of the proud and pompous professor ; nor is it the mere singing in harmonious strains of free-grace hymns. It is that enjoined by the apostle in Col. iii. 16 : "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom : teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord." And

again in Eph. v. 19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." When we are led into the sweet enjoyment of redemption, according to the purpose of the Father, by the precious blood of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, we cannot refrain from singing. Songs of rejoicing must ascend from hearts gladdened by the revelation of a precious Christ as Zion's Redeemer and Lord. Here God's redemption is experienced. Redemption from what? Redemption from a hell experienced within through the application of God's righteous law. See Rom. vii. 9: "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Wherever there is a reviving of sin in the feelings of a true-born child of God, there is the experience of a hell which he hates and from which he sighs for deliverance. When a Spirit-quickenened one feels

"The terrors of law and of God,"

he trembles, starts, and shrinks from the very thought of an eternity of banishment from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. See how this is described in Rev. xiv. 10, 11: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." In the knowledge of the truth that all apart from the Son of JEHOVAH'S love shall perish everlastingly, those of us in whose hearts He has implanted His fear are fully conscious that, left to ourselves, such a lot must have been ours. I know that in myself I am utterly vile and unworthy, not deserving the slightest mercy at the hand of a gracious God. I am not only undeserving in all I may think, say, or do, but hell-deserving for all that I do. Without the power and preciousness of God the ever-blessed Spirit, my prayers are pollution, my praises but exhibitions of my conceit, and my preaching but empty show. For all I do, hell is my due desert; for one moment I am full of pride and conceit, and the next, doubts and accursed unbelief prevail over me. Were it not for the fact He has so graciously taught me, that all true preaching is not from the man in the pulpit, but by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven conveying and communicating God's own words to the waiting hearts of His people, you may rest assured that rarely, if ever, would you see me standing in this place endeavouring to speak a few words for the glory of my God, the exaltation of His Christ, the honour of His Spirit, and the comfort and encouragement of His tried and tempted people. The God-sent minister

is made a blessing to God's own as he is led to ignore himself, loathe himself, and, as some will say, think too little of himself; but this can never be. When I am in my right mind, I think nothing of myself and everything of His Christ by whom I have introduction into the enjoyment of my standing before the face of the Father, and the rich experience of His lovingkindness and tender mercy. With the experimental possession of His great and glorious redemption, and the spiritual blessings of His everlasting covenant of grace, the heart must sing the song of redeeming love before Him. The Scriptures abound with songs of deliverance, from that of Moses in Exodus xv. to those recorded in this book of Revelation. Every one of them, almost without exception, was poured forth to God because of enemies defeated, adversaries overcome, and foes overthrown.

What is regeneration? Not that which is hawked about by the religious world as conversion. I often stand in doubt of the preacher, however sound he may be, who uses the word *conversion* to describe the work of regeneration, for I believe not one portion of the blessed Book where the word conversion occurs refers to God's grand act of regeneration. Regeneration is a sovereign and omnipotent act never to be repeated. Conversion may be repeated again and again. It indicates the working up of old material and presenting it with a new face and new features. But regeneration is the revelation of something entirely new. Pauls styles it, in 2 Cor. v. 17, "*A new creation.*" It is the manifestation of a new nature altogether apart from the fleshly, corrupt, old Adam nature. With its appearance old things pass away, and all things become new. The living child of God knows something of what the Lord meant when He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again"—margin, "*from above*"—"he cannot see the kingdom of God"—that is, he cannot understand, apprehend, or appreciate the beauties, bounties, or blessings of the inward and spiritual kingdom of God. Again, "Except a man be born of water"—the Word of the living God, which reveals Christ in union with His people and His people in union with Him—"and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"—that is, he cannot enter feelingly and intelligently into the realities of the kingdom of God. A few Sunday mornings ago I endeavoured to explain to you the distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven represents God's gracious work in the midst of corruption, deceit, and hypocrisy. The kingdom of God represents His work without the surrounding error, superstition, sin, or the flesh. "The kingdom of heaven is *at hand*," said the Baptist at the commencement of his ministry; but the Lord Jesus Christ said to His own, "The kingdom of God is *within you*." There is a vast amount of difference between the kingdom at hand and the kingdom in the heart; the kingdom near and the kingdom

experimentally possessed. An experimental and intelligent entrance into the kingdom of God cannot be enjoyed by any but those who are born again, born of the Word and Spirit of God. That Nicodemus might fully understand that flesh and Spirit are eternally distinct, the Saviour said unto him, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." There are two distinct natures in every regenerate person. The children of God, born again, and possessing a spiritual and Divine nature, present to the Author of their spiritual being spiritual and heavenly evidences of their oneness with Him. In the solemn and sovereign act of regeneration, there is no trimming, adorning, or improving of the flesh, and the subjects thereof cannot allow of that rubbish of Dr. Watts:—

"New models all the carnal mind,  
And forms the man afresh."

They possess a perfectly new nature in vital union with a risen and glorified Christ; and as they are led by the Spirit into the rich experience of God's regenerating grace, they rejoice with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and glory in the fact that old covenant commands have become new covenant comforts, and Old Testament precepts are transformed into New Testament promises. Here they enter into a spiritual understanding of their glorious privileges as God's redeemed ones in living oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV.—THEIR REDEMPTION—"And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." The heart-searching question comes to my mind, How many of us now assembled together can sing the song of redeeming love? Who among us experience the bubblings up of adoring gratitude for our redemption by love, blood, and power from Satan, sin, and self? How many as new creatures in Christ Jesus make melody in your hearts to the Lord? Who can answer these questions? Only those in whose hearts the Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are the children of God. Some of you may not be able to trace the witnessings of the Spirit clearly and to your satisfaction, yet you can sing those blessed words of Dr. Watts:—

"Assure my conscience of her part  
In the Redeemer's blood;  
And bear Thy witness with my heart  
That I am born of God."

Redemption! What is it? It is buying, purchasing; ay, and something more. It simply means a buying back, a restoration by price and power of property to the original and rightful owner. We see this in the law of redemption as set forth in

Leviticus xxv. Here the institution of the year of jubilee is recorded. According to the historic records of inspiration, the jubilee was never once observed by Israel as a nation after the flesh. Why, then, is the institution recorded? That the living children of God may come into a spiritual understanding of the blessings, privileges, and immunities of God's eternal year of jubilee. The deep which coucheth beneath the letter of the Word in Leviticus xxv., contains precious treasures into which none but those who are born of God and who follow Him as dear children can ever enter experimentally and feelingly. Oh, how blessed it is to sing in the spirit,

" In Christ the sons of Adam boast  
More blessings than their father lost ! "

The blessings of redemption were not possessed or known by Adam until after his fall, when he was brought as a redeemed sinner to the enjoyment of his acceptance in the Beloved, and of Christ being formed in him the Hope of glory.

Redemption by price. This price was too high for any created mortal to reach, too high for a seraph's flight to touch, too great for all the myriads of Adam's sons and daughters put together ever to pay. But here God's marvellous mercy is revealed, when we are taught by the Holy Ghost that all our sinful and self-righteous efforts only increase our load of guilt, and sin, and shame—when we are convinced of our utter inability to present anything of our own to God thereby to claim His favour, and to be brought to the enjoyment of His love—when we are constrained to sing or sigh with the heart before Him,—

" Not the labours of my hands  
Can fulfil Thy law's demands :  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone ;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone ! "—

then He is pleased to reveal to our waiting hearts our glorious Redeemer and His redemption price. What is the price? Blood, precious blood! See how blessedly this is stated by Peter in his 1st chapter, verses 18 and 19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ."

" Great was the price to justice due,  
When Jesus would redeem His bride :  
Nothing but precious blood would do,  
And that must flow from His own side."

Precious blood because it is that of the great and glorious God-Man. It is called in Acts xx. 28, God's own blood. Why? Because it is the blood of *His own* providing, the blood of *His own* covenant, the blood of *His own* Son. This blood has all the

excellency and worth of Deity in it. Its effects are great, rich, and glorious. It is the expression of eternal love and exhibits infinite power. It was shed for many, even for all the elect, and for none else. One of our hymn writers has sweetly expressed its limits and effects,—

“Eternal, free, electing grace  
Redemption's bound'ry sets;  
And those whom Jesus died to save,  
The Spirit ne'er forgets.”

There is the Father loving and electing, the Son loving and redeeming, the Spirit loving and regenerating. Election, redemption, and regeneration run together in unbroken harmony. Nothing discordant here. Blessed with the knowledge and understanding of these glorious truths, we can say with John, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” by the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit (1 John i. 3). Here we know we are redeemed from earth to find our home in heaven, and redeemed from among men to own no man Master save a precious Christ.

V.—THEIR RESTRAINT—“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.” A remarkable statement of the chastity of God's redeemed. Rome has made marvellous capital out of it in propagating that mark of the beast, *the celibacy of the priesthood*. She, with the mock modesty and false delicacy of an adulteress, tells us that marriage becomes not those who are set apart to serve at her altars and dispense her sacred rites. If this be true, it is strange that an all-holy God in the Old Testament dispensation should separate married men to Himself to serve in His sanctuary, and be His representatives before Israel. Ay, and strange too, that the holy Jesus should pitch upon married men to be His companions and disciples. Let the dupes and apes of the scarlet adulteress look to that solemn and salutary injunction of the Holy Ghost by the apostle Paul in Heb. xiii. 4: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Why then does the Holy Ghost make use of these words by John?—“These are they which were not defiled with women: for they are virgins.” The first part refers to the masculine, and the latter to the feminine. This is a wonderful mystery of grace which Christ blessedly opens up to His enlightened and Spirit-taught brethren, those who are brought as Nazarites indeed to experience their separation from the world, as Moses did: “For wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth” (Exod. xxxiii. 16). Look at those words, “Is it not that Thou goest with us?” JEHOVAH with His people and His people with Him. When two hearts beat

together in harmony, and their love is blessedly mutual, and their possessors in the presence of God and man become one flesh, the question is asked, "Will thou keep thee only unto him, or her, so long as ye both shall live?" The persons become sacred to each other. This joining together is of JEHOVAH, who has stamped and sealed it with His holy approbation. There is no description of this union so sweet as that flowing from the pen of Peter, "Heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter iii. 7). JEHOVAH, in the riches of His grace and the fulness of His love, says to His people, "I am married unto you" (Jer. iii. 14). Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever He had formed the earth and the world, in covenant transactions and ties of eternal love He was the Husband of His Church. He is her's, and He will keep to her as long as He shall live, and none of the communications of His covenant affection shall go beyond the bounds fixed in His eternal counsels. He teaches His own to be like Himself and keep herself to Him. Blessed be God, this is true, as His people live feelingly and experimentally by the grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, through Him, to Him, with Him, and in Him. Upon His head the world place every crown—the crown of creation, the crown of redemption, the crown of providence, the crown of grace, and the crown of glory. They acknowledge Him as the Author of their salvation, own Him as their Husband and Provider, and ascribe to Him all might, majesty, dominion, and power. Do they contemplate their salvation? They know it is His. Do they remember all the way they have been led? They see Him as their leader. Do they rejoice in the experimental realisation of His lovingkindness and tender mercy? They know it is by the sweet kisses of His mouth. Do they glory in the possession of the blessings of His everlasting covenant of grace? They are persuaded it is all by His exceeding great and precious promises, which are all Yea and Amen to them. He is the gracious Revealer to them of this glorious truth:—

"In Him the Father never saw  
The least transgression of His law;  
Perfection then in Him we view,  
His saints in Him are perfect too."

*"These are they which were not defiled with women."* What kind of women? There are all sorts of women in the world, chaste and lewd, pure and adulterous. The lewd and adulterous are alluded to here as fallen and unclean professors. Now mark! The living child of God is truly sensitive concerning the purity of his faith, the reality of his hope, and the chasteness of his love. I stand here this morning in the presence of my God and His people, and can say that next to life itself I prize the purity of this pulpit. Why? Because God has wrought in me that desire felt so strongly by the apostle Paul, and expressed in

2 Cor. xi. 2—4: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another Gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with me." So it reads in the margin. Paul knew that he would be considered harsh, particular, and too nice. Ah, my dear friends, you may depend upon it, I should not feel comfortable if I thought the atmosphere of this place was polluted with the stench of the creature in the enunciation of duty-faith, duty-prayer, and duty-praise. It would be my misery to think that your ears had been offended with those sounds which charm the ears of those who hug their chains of spiritual slavery, and persevere in *their doing* down to the burning beds of eternal damnation. But for me to have the quiet assurance that the testimony from myself, and from those in my absence, is all of a piece, is a source of comfort and encouragement to my soul before God. The apostle declared, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy," or, *with the jealousy of God*; "for I have espoused you to one Husband." So have I. My desire for you is, that you may not be wedded to me. Cease from man. I have not espoused you to myself, nor even to the Church in this place. If I did so, I should be departing from "the simplicity that is in Christ." If I see a person in possession of a broken heart manifesting a desire to become one with us in Church membership, my heart goes forth to receive such an one, and I pray the Lord to unite him openly with ourselves. But I know that God has many unbelieving, yet believing, children. These cannot speak an approving word of the work of grace in them, nor make any boast of God doing anything for them, yet, the longing desires of their hearts are Godward, homeward, heavenward, giving blessed evidence of their oneness with, and acceptance in, the Beloved. I have known, and do know, those who are eager for place, position, and power, who can prate out their experience at the corner of every street, but my soul stands in doubt of them. The company I delight in is formed of those of whom the Holy Ghost declares,

"*They are virgins.*" The glory of God's Gospel is this, that in His glorious purpose His Church and people stand in unbroken, unceasing, uninterrupted oneness with Christ in His purity, spotlessness, and perfection. Knowing this, we delight to sing with dear old John Kent,—

"Bethroth'd in love, ere time begun,  
His blood-bought bride with Jesus see:  
Made by eternal union ONE,  
Who was, and is, and is to be."



Thus in His eyes she ever stood  
 From wrinkle and from blemish free  
 Loved with the dateless love of God,  
 And blest by the great sacred Three."

Notice those words,—

" Thus in His eyes she ever stood  
 From wrinkle and from blemish free."

Yes, when she fell in Adam, she stood in Christ as pure as He is pure. When she wandered from her Husband in the Adam-fall,—

" *She* on His sacred bosom lay,  
 Loved with an everlasting love."

When down in the depths of spiritual corruption, "in the glass of His decrees," the eye of the Father saw her standing in the very heights of glory, to which she must be lifted by the power of His rich and magnanimous grace, and into the knowledge and understanding of this she must be brought by the teaching of His Spirit, the declaration of His Word, the preaching of His Gospel, and the communication of His love. This is the blessed lot of the living Church of God in union with the Lamb upon Mount Zion. "*They are virgins.*" In the purpose of the Father sin cannot touch them, in the person of the Son Satan cannot hurt them, in the power of the Holy Ghost the flesh cannot corrupt them. Neither sin, Satan, nor self can hurt or destroy in all this holy mountain.

VI.—THEIR RECTITUDE—"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." This portion puzzled me and filled me with anxiety for many a long year. I used to look at it with a fleshly free-will eye, and ponder over it with a legal spirit. I thought, if the virgins of Christ's company follow Him whithersoever He goeth, then surely I cannot be one of them, for I wander from Him and obey not the precepts, commands, and injunctions of His Word. Ay, since He has quickened me into spiritual life and brought me as a purged worshipper into His temple, I have found out that if following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth refers to what some style *Church order and Church ordinances*, then I have not followed Him at all. But as the scales fell from the eyes of my spiritual understanding, and I was led to see this as a spiritual following, my heart rejoiced in the enjoyment of that liberty with which Christ makes His people free. I see that my following the Lamb has respect to Him as my Forerunner appointed in the covenant of old to go before me into every spot of temptation and tribulation, suffering and sorrow, and there reveal Himself as my Salvation, and cause me to experience the tender sympathy of His heart. Now I do not wish to speak one word to wound the tender sensibility of any poor child of God, but I have often heard this quoted in reference to the ordinance of baptism. To my mind this is sheer folly. Have all those on Mount Zion been outwardly baptized, either by immersion in a baptistery or by

sprinkling at a font? No such thing. Look at the dying thief. The only baptism he could boast of was that described by Cowper,—

“The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That Fountain in his day;  
And here am I, Lord, vile as he,  
Wash all my sins away.”

Upon a loving Saviour's bosom he winged his flight to glory, where now he stands with the blood-washed and glorified followers of the Lamb “on Zion's heavenly hill.” Many who “drink full draughts of bliss unknown” in the realms of bliss, have never followed the Lamb's injunction, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” Bread and wine as emblems of His broken body and shed blood they never partook of, yet they sit with Him and feast their souls upon His beauty and His love. While here below they drank of the cup of trembling and of the cup of salvation from His gracious hands. They oftentimes trembled with the experience of His judgment upon their wretched flesh, and rejoiced in the sweet enjoyment of His mercy upon their redeemed spirits. Following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, is true of every lamb and sheep in His elect and redeemed flock. Now look at JEHOVAH'S promise to His own Israel: “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee unto the place which I have prepared” (Exodus xxiii. 20). Before His people He goes and sometimes makes them a terror to all their enemies round about them who would otherwise persecute and annoy them. You see this more than once in the history of Jacob. See Gen. xxxi. 21: “And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.” Again, in Gen. xxxv. 5: “And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.” God went before Jacob to defend him, though Jacob was not conscious of the fact. Laban evidently meant mischief, but was compelled to acknowledge to Jacob that God appeared to him in the night and gave him to understand that if he put a finger upon Jacob, He would settle matters with him. During a life of sorrow a precious Christ went before His people, and it is their mercy to know that “In all their afflictions He was afflicted” (Isaiah lxiii. 9), and now they are with Him in all His temptations (Luke xxii. 28). It is ours this morning to rejoice in that blessed truth: “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews ii. 18). O, ye tempted and tried ones, who may be passing through deep floods of sorrows and fierce fires of temptation, think of this glorious truth, that He who is your Husband and your Head, He with whom you are experimentally one, has gone before you every step of your journey, and will cause you to follow after Him according to His covenant

declaration, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand" (John x. 27, 28). Blessed privilege to the children of God. As His redeemed sheep, they are "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." Why styled "*the first-fruits*?" As the first-fruits of the harvest are small in comparison to the harvest itself, so the redeemed appear but a handful among men—a few lilies among many thorns—

"A little flock amidst a host  
Of lions, dogs, and swine;  
Distinguish'd by the Holy Ghost.  
And Jesus says, They're Mine."

As the first-fruits were dedicated to God, so His people are precious to Him in choice, redemption, and acceptance.

VII.—THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS—"And in their mouth was no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." This is true concerning the whole election of grace. The redeemed and regenerate children of God stand before Him, in the person of their great and glorious Surety, righteous as He is righteous. He took their sins and made an end of them. He gave them His righteousness, which shall never be abolished. He who knew no sin was made sin for them, that they might be made the Righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. v. 21). His name is, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," and as such they are known in the court of heaven (Jeremiah xxiii. 6, xxxiii. 16). The design, aim, and end of the Gospel ministry is to present every man, brought under its power, perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. i. 28). These "are complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power" (Col. ii. 10). The Father has accepted or graced them in the Beloved (Ephes. i. 6); and the Beloved has determined to "present *them* to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, holy and without blemish" (Ephes. v. 27). These, during their time-state here upon earth, delight to hear His voice when their sighs, groans, and longings ascend to Him, for in their intercourse with Him there is no guile in their mouth. They do not profess to be what they are not, and fear to presume to be what God has not taught them by the power of the Holy Ghost. Are they filthy in their feelings and experience? They confess it. Are they hell-deserving? They acknowledge it. While they declare their blackness before Him, He pronounces them to be comely. While they write bitter things against themselves, He blesses them with a good hope through grace. While they declare themselves to be all sin, deserving nought but banishment from His presence and from the glory of His power, He will cheer them with His own sweet whisper of love: "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee."

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE."

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
MAY 18TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"I am the Resurrection and the Life."—John xi. 25.

IN a variety of titles our blessed Lord and Saviour is pleased to reveal Himself in the written Word, and by the grace of His own Spirit, to the hearts of those who are eternally loved by Him, everlastingly saved by Him, perfectly washed by Him from all sin, and completely clothed by Him in the garments of salvation, and in the robe of righteousness provided for them in His perfect obedience to the Father's law. There is not a necessity that one of His brethren can experience, but He is sure to be revealed in some character, office, or title in which He will fully meet, answer, and supply the same, causing the heart to understand and rejoice in the blessedness of those words spoken by the man of God to the penurious Amaziah, "The LORD is able to give thee much more than this" (2 Chron. xxv. 9). Whatever revelation He gives of Himself down here, is but a faint earnest of what He intends to reveal in Himself. Whatever may be the blessing He is pleased to bestow upon me, it is sure to prove small in comparison to the subsequent unfoldings of those spiritual blessings which the Father committed to His keeping, and which He, as a faithful steward, must communicate to me.

It is a blessed exercise, when led by the Holy Ghost to look, and meditate feelingly upon the various titles given to our Lord in the Scriptures of truth, and especially in this Gospel by John. Here we are taught to rejoice in the sweet assurance that all our spiritual necessities will and must be graciously supplied.

"When Christ reveals His gracious name,  
He calls Himself the great 'I AM,'  
And leaves a blank—His loved ones may  
Supply those things for which they pray."

Are we in darkness? Ofttimes we are. He says, "I AM come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness" (John xii. 46). Are we mourning over our deadness? He says, "I AM the Life." Do we lament because of our ignorance of the God we love? He says, "I AM the Truth." This is equal to His saying, All you may know apart from Myself is false and deceiving. Do we feel we are wandering in uncertainty and dread? He will not be far off, for He goeth before, saying, "I AM the Way" (John xiv. 6), and, according to His Father's covenant arrangements, He follows us in the beaten path of tribulation, in which we have experienced many a pang and many a pain, and gently whispers, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. xxx. 21). I ofttimes stumble in my journey, but His gracious appearance inspires and cheers me, so that I go on my way rejoicing in hope of the glory He has in store for me. Am I hungry? Yes, and often to such an extent that, according to Psa. cvii. 5: "Hungry and thirsty my soul faints within me." He comes and makes Himself precious to me with this revelation, "I AM the Bread of Life" (John vi. 48). Am I exercised concerning the object of my worship and adoration? He gently whispers, "I AM thy Lord, and worship thou Me" (Psa. xlv. 11). It was only the other day I received a precious letter from an afflicted one at a distance whose mind is much exercised as to which of the Persons in the God-head she ought to address in her approaches to the mercy-seat. The Father had been made so precious to her that all her prayers, petitions, and lisplings are to Him. She is anxious to know whether she dishonours the Son and the Holy Ghost. My dear friends, every child of God must address the throne of the heavenly grace according to the revelation JEHOVAH is pleased to give of Himself. Does the Holy Ghost lead me into a blessed apprehension of my place and portion in the one family? Does He witness with my spirit that I am a true-born son of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Has the Father had compassion upon me in my helplessness, pitied me in my distress, and borne with me in my waywardness and wanderings, making that word life and power to my heart, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust?" Then, I shall delight to lip the hallowed name of Father. Is the Holy Ghost pleased to reveal the beauty and blessedness of a precious Christ as my Brother born for adversity, and give me sweetly to experience those spots of adversity through which He went as my Forerunner? I cannot help but speak to Him, and address Him in the words of that precious hymn we have just now sung,—

"Jesus, Thy name indeed is sweet,  
In every scene, at every hour,

All that I need is there complete ;  
Love all Divine, Almighty power ;  
Yet full of tenderest sympathy,  
My soul would rest its all on Thee."

Do I experience unmistakable evidences of the grace and indwelling of my Friend and Companion—God the Holy Ghost? I am compelled by the sweet omnipotence of His love to speak to Him, and say,—

"And Thou eternal Spirit vast—  
What love can Thine transcend ?  
Since Thou Thy lot with me hath cast,  
Indwelling God and Friend."

As He witnesses with my spirit that I am a child of God I cannot keep from communing with Him. But how does He witness with my spirit that I am born of God? Not always in communicating His heavenly consolations, but sometimes in creating the necessity for His consolations. He creates a hatred and horror of sin in the revelation thereof, which is the necessity I experience for God's salvation, and He brings about great searchings of heart as to whether I am amongst the few men of the Firstborn, the One who excels in strength for me. As He works these enquiries in me, it is only that He may graciously answer them by taking of the things of Christ, the great and glorious God-Man Mediator, who could say to those around Him, "Before Abraham was I AM." Thus we are brought into the enjoyment of a Saviour's love which enables us to sing in the precious language of dear old Samuel Medley,—

"In every office He sustains,  
In every victory He gains,  
In every counsel of His will,  
He's precious to His people still."

Our own God favoured us highly this morning in causing me to read in your hearing a very precious portion of His blessed word, the glorious eighth of Romans. As I read it my spirit was moved to a spiritual apprehension of my interest in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which hath made me free from the law of sin and of death, and to rejoice that in Christ Jesus I have no condemnation and from Him no separation. But it is ours to seek for a little instruction, consolation, edification, and establishment in the things of God from the precious words I have read for you by way of text,—

"I AM the Resurrection and the Life."

In seeking we will notice,—

I.—THEIR GLOOMY SURROUNDINGS—Sickness and death.

II.—THE GLORIOUS SPEAKER—"I AM the Resurrection and the Life."

III.—THE GRACIOUS CHARACTERS—"He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

## IV.—A GRAVE QUESTION—"Believest thou this?"

I.—THEIR GLOOMY SURROUNDINGS—Sickness and death. We find at the commencement of the chapter, "A certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." I know of no sight upon earth so delightful as that of a family, father, mother, and children all one in the things of God. I know a few such cases and could enumerate them, but time would fail me, and there is no necessity. It is a special mercy and precious privilege for relatives to be "Heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter iii. 7). Here we see a family, a brother and two sisters, loved by the Lord. Why is Martha named first? Some say it is because she was the mistress of the household. Well, I have no desire to question that statement, but I think I see, by the Spirit's guidance, a far better, and more spiritual reason why her name is mentioned first. Can you tell me why Peter's name should have been singled out from the rest of the apostles and mentioned on resurrection ground? "But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee" (Mark xvi. 7). Was it not because He who has compassion upon the ignorant and upon them that are out of the way (Heb. v. 2), would have His honest but wavering disciple specially remembered, to magnify His grace, and show forth His loving concern over His tried and tempted one? Martha was of a busy, bustling spirit. Ofttimes things are said concerning our busy Marthas which would be as well unsaid, for you may rest assured the Master has need of His careful and serving Marthas as well as of His quiet and patient Marys. Notice those words, "Jesus loved Martha." That is a precious narrative at the close of Luke vii., in which Jesus is set forth expressing His love and concern over the greatest sinner in the house, according to the judgment of those surrounding her. To Simon Jesus said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." To the weaklings of His fold the gentle Shepherd shows His wondrous love and tender care.

It is pleasing and instructive to notice the reason given by the sisters why the Master should visit His sick friend and speak His healing word. "Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." It is not, Lord, he who loves Thee, but, "he whom Thou lovest." That was a powerful reason why the Master should come. O, how blessed it is to sing intelligently with Toplady,

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee:  
Thy love is almighty, preventing, and free."

Now comes the test of friendship and the proof of love. "When Jesus heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where He was." These few words fall

upon my ears with peculiar sweetness sometimes at our prayer meetings on Friday evenings,

"THY DELAYS ARE NOT DENIALS."

The delay of a precious Christ in the communication of His love and sympathy to the hearts of any of His children is never a denial, for, "Blessed are all they that wait for Him" (Isa. xxx. 18) though their waiting may be that of a whole lifetime, like that of dear old Jacob, who, on his dying couch could say, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD" (Gen. xlix. 18). Then why did Jesus delay? For the glory of God, as He declares in a subsequent portion of this narrative. "Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee : and goest Thou thither again?" Self-preservation, as well as concern for their Master's safety, lurked beneath this saying of the disciples. Mark well His reply to them: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world." What is the lesson contained in these words? It is that found in those precious lines of Ryland,—

"Plagues and death around me fly,  
Till He bids I cannot die;  
Not a single shaft can hit  
Till the God of love sees fit."

Jesus as much as said to His fearing disciples, Never mind the danger you fear, or the doubts which harass and perplex you, or the anxieties and cares which wear away your spirits. While it is day we must work that which the Father has appointed to us, and neither earth nor hell can frustrate one of His plans. "These things said He : and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth : but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." Here we have two very blessed expressions—death is a sleep and Lazarus is a friend. "Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep (that is, soundly), he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death : but they thought that He had spoken of taking rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe ; nevertheless let us go unto him." Here we see the kindness and patient grace of our blessed Lord and Master. A precious sight for the eye of God-wrought faith to contemplate! A loving, kind, and patient Master surrounded by dull, ignorant, short-sighted, unbelieving disciples. You may get into some company who profess they are always believing. Believing brethren! Well, I tell you honestly, I do not believe in them at all, for they are not at all like the brethren who surrounded our blessed Lord even on resurrection ground, as we shall see shortly. From the first to the last of His ministry upon earth, the Lord Jesus Christ gathered around Him the



doubters, the fearers, the unbelieving believers, the sorrowful and the sad, and these were possessed of His life, gloried in His love, and walked in His light alone. "Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Some would have us believe that Thomas meant dying with Lazarus; but Thomas really meant, Let us go with our loved Master into the midst of all the dangers which may encompass Him, and, if need be, die with Him. Yet, when the testing time came, where was Thomas? He was among the rest of the disciples, of whom it is recorded, "And they all forsook Him, and fled" (Mark xiv. 50). Though Jesus knew this would be, yet in Thomas's plaintive desire there must have been something to touch the tender heart of his sympathizing Friend. Jesus went to Bethany. "Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Here we see a mixture of faith and unbelief. "*If Thou hadst been here.*" Time and space are as nothing to JEHOVAH-JESUS. At the close of chapter iv. we have an account of the healing of the nobleman's son though Jesus was not there. He speaks the word from His high throne in glory down to the deepest depths of a redeemed sinner's need, and relief and deliverance are experienced. Martha added, "But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." She evidently did not then see that the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father in His eternal power and Godhead. All that was necessary was for Him to will, or, according to the faith of the centurion who said to Him, "Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed" (Matt. viii. 8). "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Future things occupied the mind of Martha; but present tense blessings alone can comfort the heart of the exercised child of God. Spiritual realities in experimental possession are the joy and rejoicing of true-born children of God. The earnest of future bliss and blessedness is the very life of God in the soul of His child. It is not simply a belief in something which may take place, but it is the blessed foretaste of the unclouded and uninterrupted enjoyment of that glory which God has treasured up with undisturbed security for all them that love His appearing. This brings us to notice the way in which our blessed Lord answered Martha in the words of the text.

II.—THE GLORIOUS SPEAKER—"I AM the Resurrection and the Life." Look at the revelation of His nature and character as the great JEHOVAH given in those two words, "I AM." Here He declares His oneness in essence and attributes with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Is the Father the glorious

JEHOVAH? Jesus says, "I and My Father are One" (John x. 30). Is the Father the great I AM? Jesus says, "Before Abraham was I AM" (John viii. 58). The words of the text are full of sweet encouragement to the drooping and dreary children of God. "I AM the Resurrection and the Life" to My people during the whole of their sojourn in these wilds of sin, suffering, disappointment and death. Those of us who are acquainted with the New Testament Scriptures know, that after Jesus was risen from the dead the resurrection was the prominent truth in the preaching of the apostles. There was a necessity for this, for the chief priests and the Pharisees declared our Lord an impostor, and after His death, according to Matt. xxvii. 62, 63, they went to Pilate, "Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." The Lord Jesus Christ a deceiver? His resurrection proved Him to be the Truth and no deceiver. Yes, it was God's proof that He was His Son. See Rom. i. 4: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The marginal rendering is, "*determined* to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead." The grand qualification for the office of apostle was, a sight of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh after His resurrection from the dead. See how Paul declares this in 1 Cor. ix. 1: "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" Again, in 1 Cor. xv. 3-8: "And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Paul was an eye-witness to the fact that Christ was appointed by the Father to the work of His people's salvation, that He wrought out a perfect righteousness to the law, that He suffered the doom and death due to His people, triumphed over the power of the grave for them, ascended into heaven's highest glory, where He ever lives as the Witness to the validity of the Father's purpose, the perfection of His salvation, and the reality of the work of His own blessed Spirit in the experience of His redeemed. Jesus risen is the Father's attestation to the truth of His Messiahship, righteousness, and salvation. This is the burden of the apostle's argument in 1 Cor. xv. Look at the twelfth verse: "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ; whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." According to this Scripture the resurrection

of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Father's attestation to His Messiahship, but it is the pledge of the future glorification of the whole election of grace. Did Christ the Head of His body rise from the dead? All the members of His body in the purpose, decree, and determination of the Father rose in Him. This is the earnest of the spiritual resurrection of every soul given unto Him and blessed with His eternal and unceasing interest in them.

See how the apostle describes this glorious truth as wrought in the experience of all true believers in 2 Cor. iv. 10—14: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." Here resurrection life and power is not represented simply as a future event, but as a present and blessed reality. In Phil. iii. 10, 11, Paul opens up this glorious truth from his own inner and hidden life: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Resurrection in the experience of the living child of God is a spiritual reality. See how this is portrayed in the resurrection of Christ's body from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. The entrance to the sepulchre was blocked with a huge stone which was sealed. The picked men of the Roman army were set as a watch, but when the morning of the resurrection-day dawned, the glory of the Lord shone as dazzling brightness, and a living Christ issued forth victorious from the tomb.

"Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,  
Christ hath burst the gates of hell."

Hell's designs were overthrown, death's power was destroyed, the world, represented by the Roman soldiers, lay as dead at His feet. Where is the world in relation to you and me this morning? Listen! "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14). Oneness with a risen Christ places the world beneath our feet, with all the world calls good or great. Lifted up into resurrection oneness with Him we enjoy the blessedness of that set before us by the apostle in Eph. ii. 4—6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are

saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Mark you, this is not a resurrection in prospect, but one in present experience and blessed enjoyment. It was this that caused the apostle to say, "*Our citizenship is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself*" (Phil. iii. 20, 21). The resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus Christ is the declaration of the Father's approbation of, and delight in His obedience and blood-shedding, the earnest and pledge of the spiritual resurrection of the members who stand in eternal oneness with their great and glorious Head. Turn to Acts iv. 33: "And with great power gave the apostle witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." The faithful witnessing to the resurrection of Christ by hearts that feel and know its power must be attended by the grace and power of God the Holy Ghost in the quickening, counselling, and comforting of the soul eternally loved.

III.—THE GRACIOUS CHARACTERS—"He that believeth in Me, though He were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. The living children of God are here set before us in two characters, one believing, yet dead, the other believing and alive. As we know and experience the preciousness and power of Christ's resurrection, we are painfully conscious of death working in us. Before resurrection there must be death. This is revealed in the Saviour's declaration to Martha, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." It is set forth in the words of our blessed Lord, as recorded in John v. 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My words, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." That you may have a right understanding of this glorious truth, let me ask you, what know you of death by the killing power of the law and the convicting grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit? It is a precious, but painful privilege to be led into the true understanding of that set forth in JEHOVAH'S dealings with His ancient people Israel recorded in Psalm lxxviii. 34: "When He slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer." These were slain before they sought. This death is described by Paul in Rom. vii. 9: "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came"—not when I went to the commandment, read, or made use of it, but—"when the commandment

came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." This killing process goes on wherever God's righteous, spiritual, and fiery law is brought home to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. Then these terrible words are heard and spiritually understood: "The soul that sinneth shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 4). I know by painful experience that I not only have sinned, but do sin, and shall sin as long as I am in this body. This causes me to know, and feel, and confess that nothing but death is mine. If I judge of myself before my God according to anything that can spring from this wretched nature of mine, death is my portion. If I look at the best performances of my hands, death is their only due. If I weigh well my own words, they are the pourings out of an open sepulchre. See! "Their throat is an open sepulchre" (Rom. iii. 13). That speaks of the mouth of every man, woman, and child by nature, and indicates that all coming therefrom is nothing but corruption when judged in the light of JEHOVAH'S infinite holiness. All my prayer, praise, and preaching, apart from the hidden movements of God's blessed Spirit in my heart, are but the exhibitions of spiritual death hated and abhorred by Him and by every poor sinner whom He brings into the searching light of His sacred and solemn presence.

Death! Ofttimes the living children of God experience this when they would be most alive. They long for the reviving power of God the ever-blessed Spirit in their heart; but they are languid and drooping. They would ascend in spirit to the heights of the covenant: but the depths of the earth and cleaving to the dust is their portion. They long to hear the voice of the Beloved saying, "Because I live ye shall live also," and to be blessed with the assurance expressed in the language of Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). The God-sent preacher ascends the pulpit sometimes with a feeling sense of desertion, dreariness, and death; he groans for the reviving power of the Holy Ghost, he longs for the enjoyment of the resurrection life of his glorious Lord, he begs for living words—words of grace made life to him, causing him to live above himself and make him a spiritual comforter to the tried and tempted in Zion. He attempts to forget himself and think of nothing but Him who is his only Life and Love; but the more he tries, the more he fails. He struggles to free himself from the death which depresses him, and from the grave clothes of nature; but the more he struggles, the more he is entangled. Yet in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, ere he is aware, streams of rich and sovereign grace flow from the heights above where a precious Jesus ever lives for

him, and he is enabled to speak, from a heart boiling and bubbling with spiritual gratitude, of the things which he handles and feels, and there is joy and rejoicing in the presence of his God. The same death is oftentimes felt in the pew. Frequently you come here with the plaintive inquiry, "What think ye, will He come to the feast?" You hope He will. I know it is so. I have tried to join in singing sweet Gospel hymns when my heart has been as hard as a stone. The prayer has been breathed before the presence of the King, but not a God-breathed motion have I experienced within. The preaching has been a glorious declaration of God's sovereign truth, every statement corroborated by the written Word and made life and power to some, while I have had to lament with Job, "Lo, He goeth by me, and I see Him not: He passeth on also, but I perceive Him not" (Job ix. 11). No life or vitality experienced, but a death that may be felt, and my only comfort is that the dead know nor feel not anything. It is no mean mercy to the child of God that he can sit in a place of worship and feel the death which he hates, and long for the life which a covenant God in Christ alone can communicate. Is this in keeping with God's blessed Word? Yes. Look at the experience of Heman in Psalm lxxviii. 3: "My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom Thou rememberest no more; and they are cut off from Thy hand. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps." I know this was the experience of the Head when here upon earth, and you may depend upon it, Heman felt it in measure. The cry still goes forth from living souls, "Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise Thee?" Yes, blessed be God, they shall and do within these walls when He makes Himself known as the Resurrection and the Life. "Shall Thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or Thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark? and Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" Most assuredly all this shall be experienced by the living in Jerusalem. Paul says, "we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10). What life? His resurrection life. Saved from what? Saved from that barren, cold, and lifeless state over which we so often grieve. And here let me ask you, Was not this the experience of our dear old friend Jonah? I style him, our dear old friend, because I can claim kindred with him as he is revealed in that precious second chapter of his: "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell," or, *the grave*, "cried I, and Thou heardest my voice. Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight." No experience of the life of God in the soul, no realisation of the hope with which He inspires the hearts of His people; yet blessed with this evidence of His life, "I will

look again toward Thy holy temple." Now turn with me to Isaiah xxxviii. 14: "O LORD, I am oppressed: undertake for me." In Hezekiah's complaint we have a Scriptural description of God's believing people. They believe, yet are tormented with accursed unbelief. They are unbelieving, doubting, fearing, and oftentimes, according to their own judgment, dead. But the testimony of the Master to those unbelieving believers is, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; He that believeth in Me though he were dead yet shall he live." To them He brings His precious promises home with power, and cheers them with the warm assurance of His undying interest in them. Let us look at the other character.

"*Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.*" Are we in possession of His life? It is everlasting. It may be hidden from the judgment of its possessor, but it is safe and sure. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John iii. 36). Are we born again? Then we can never die. See 1 Peter i. 23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." No death, decay, or destruction to the life seed sown by JEHOVAH in the hearts of His people. The possessors experience the changing spiritual seasons and in them they are taught to fear their God, and sometimes express themselves in that language of plaintive assurance, "Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, *shalt quicken me again*, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth" (Psalm lxxi. 20). God knows we oftentimes want quickening again; we want to know the mind of God and are left in doubt about it; we long to enjoy His love, but we mourn over our enmity; we desire and pray to live in the Spirit when nothing but the flesh surrounds and influences us; we beg to feast upon the bounties of His table, but we are left to sigh and cry at mercy's door. Blessed be His dear name, He has promised to bring us safely out of all our troubles.

IV.—A GRAVE QUESTION—"Believest thou this?" Fleshly religious highflyers believe not this. They cannot believe it, understanding none of those exercises peculiar to those referred to in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "He that believeth, though he were dead." The children of God love to have pertinent and pungent questions put to their hearts by the blessed Teacher and heart-Searcher. "Believest thou this?" There can be no resurrection or reviving power felt in the heart, nor any experience of the life of God independently of oneness with Him who is the Life of God to His people. As the question is asked, you may hesitate to answer, but it will be your joy to read your character in that of those who were your Master's associates upon resurrection ground. Look at that wonderful chapter, Mark xvi. The fifth verse reveals affrighted seekers of Jesus. Well may you frightened and timid seekers of Jesus

rejoice at such a declaration as this. Look at verse 8: "And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre: for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man: for they were afraid." Read verse 9: "He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, *out of whom He had cast seven devils.*" Mark well verses 10 and 11: "And she went and told them that had been with Him, as *they mourned and wept.* And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not." Then notice verse 14: "Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen." These were the characters with whom a precious Christ was associated on resurrection ground: Frightened seekers; tremblers; amazed; Mary Magdalene; mourners; weepers; unbelieving believers! We can bless and praise His hallowed name for the assurance that He is still the same in identifying Himself with us. When He comes revealing Himself in His resurrection power and glory, searching our hearts with the question, "Believest thou this?" we may well answer Him in the words of Martha, "Yea, Lord." That is a confession of His sovereignty. "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." There is gracious certainty in this.

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

Before we separate, let me say—It was our lot last Wednesday afternoon to commit to the dust all that was mortal of one very near and dear to many of us in this place. The service was a very precious and solemn one to me. Our dear friend and brother Rolleston officiated, and I rejoiced in my sorrow to hear that blessed man of God read that service over the remains of one of whom we have a bright hope that he is now in the presence of his God and Saviour, basking in the unclouded sunshine of His love. My heart said Amen to very many precious petitions at the grave, and I could not refrain from an inward rejoicing as these words dropped into my heart: "*We give Thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching Thee that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom.*" Yes, my heart bounded with thankfulness, for the bereaved ones standing by were buoyed up with the blessed hope that he whom they loved so well was then divested of the burden of the flesh, and free from all sin and sorrow, gazing on Him he loved, and rejoicing before Him with unsinning and unceasing delight.

I speak of him this morning, not because I can make an elaborate display of his faith, hope, love, or good works, for, when spoken to at any time concerning these, he would invariably question his possession of them. Were it now possible



to communicate with his ransomed spirit before the throne, he would have nothing to say concerning himself. The one Object of the Church's love and adoration is all his joy and all his bliss. He worshipped here in spirit and in truth. He was a retiring, doubting, and fearing disciple. An unbelieving believer. The moment I heard of his death, my heart found him described in those blessed words of Hart's:—

"Ye lambs of Christ's fold, ye weaklings in faith,  
Who long to lay hold on life by His death;  
Who fain would believe Him, and in your best room  
Would gladly receive Him, but fear to presume."

He came here hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and now he is filled with it. He came as a humble suppliant at the footstool of sovereign mercy, he is now a rejoicing conqueror before the throne of glory. He was one of the trustees of this chapel, and was ever found faithful to his trust. His one aim and desire for this place was that it might be kept sacred for the proclamation of JEHOVAH'S free, sovereign, electing, redeeming, regenerating, and glorifying grace. Discord he hated, and, from a record in our books, we learn that he ever sought the peace and prosperity of God's Zion.

He has gone to that blessed home of the Father, prepared by Him from the foundation of the world, possessed and held in undisturbed security by the Son, the earnest of which is given to the longing hearts of Zion's pilgrims by God the Holy Ghost. May it be yours and mine so to enjoy the Master's company here, that when the time comes for Him to say, "Friends, come up higher," we may be found as servants waiting for our Lord, and an entrance be ministered unto us abundantly by Him into His everlasting kingdom and glory. Until then may our hope be sweetly stayed with the blessed assurance that—

In Christ there is no condemnation;  
From Christ there can be no separation.

### In Affectionate Remembrance

OF

EBENEZER HUDSON COWELL,

WHO ENTERED INTO HIS ETERNAL REST, MAY 8TH, 1879,

AGED 54 YEARS.

—:—

"SHEW ME THY GLORY."

—:—

"My soul anticipates the day,  
Would stretch her wings and soar away  
To aid the song, a palm to bear,  
And bow—the chief of sinners—there."

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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“THE PATH OF THE JUST.”

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,  
DECEMBER 12TH, 1875, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”—Prov. iv. 18.

IN the first chapter of this wondrous book of Proverbs, sixth verse, we read:—“To understand a proverb, and the interpretation (*an eloquent speech, margin*); the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.” And in the preceding verse: “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.” Now, for wise counsel there must be a wise Counsellor, and for the understanding of a language foreign to that country in which we were born and in which we have found a home, there must of necessity be an Interpreter. Everything independent of this wise Counsellor, of this great Interpreter, is dark and gloomy, vague and meaningless. Who is this wise and wonderful Counsellor? Who is this great and marvellous Interpreter? Who can bring from the deep which coucheth beneath the proverbs of this mysterious Book words of instruction, comfort, and encouragement? It is that “One Man among a thousand,” of whom Solomon wrote in Eccles. vii. 28. He is the One of a thousand of whom Elihu spoke to Job:—“If there be a Messenger with him, an Interpreter, One among a thousand, to show unto man His uprightness” (Job xxxiii. 23). This is the Man of JEHOVAH’S counsel, the exponent of His will, the Revealer of His secrets, the Interpreter of His Word and providence. He, the Son, has a commission from the Father to declare and give His words to the people of His choice. He shows no hesitancy in the execution of the commission, but rather exhibits an intensity of desire to communicate His Father’s mind to all the children given to Him in covenant before the foundation of the world. See! “O righteous Father,

the world hath not known Thee ; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John xvii. 25, 26). Our Jesus, the Son of the Father's love, is our only Interpreter, He alone can reveal the Father, and to Him we can say, with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 68). One of a thousand! Ay, One of a thousand! for we only go to Him after we have sought counsel from the 999. Is not this the case with you and me? If there appear any difficulties on the face of God's Holy Word, if we experience perplexities in His providence, seek we not counsel one of another, instead of appealing to Him who can unravel all mysteries, remove all doubts, and bring us into the light of JEHOVAH? Blessed be God, this is the Messenger of love to our hearts, the Interpreter of light to our understanding, and the Communicator of life to our drooping spirits. As we behold His uprightness, by the illuminating power of the Holy Ghost, we worship God in the Spirit, make our boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Look at that precious portion in Eph. i. 17:—"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him;" or, as you read in the margin, "for the acknowledgment of Him." Now, without the acknowledgment of a precious Christ, in the passage before us, there will be no shining light to our souls; but as we are brought by the teaching of the Holy Ghost to acknowledge Him, all difficulties in connection with the passage vanish, and *that* is fulfilled in our hearts' experience:—"With Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light shall we see light." That's it! In the person of a precious Christ we have One who gives us to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; while His grace-filled lips and eloquent speech make plain the words of the wise, and throw glorious and gracious light upon their dark sayings. The Father hath given us a spiritual understanding (1 John v. 20); the Son of His love opens the understanding (Luke xxiv. 45); the blessed Spirit enlightens the understanding, and takes of the beauties, blessings, and bounties of the covenant, and shows them unto us (John xvi. 13—15). In this everlasting, sure, and well-ordered covenant, the children of God have secured unto them a gracious Interpreter who is called by way of pre-eminence, "The Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). He is not simply *wise*, but Wisdom; and those who are wise in Him, are wise indeed, and all are fools beside. In the person and work of Emmanuel, dark sayings and parables appear plain, precious, and profitable; but "without Christ" this book of Proverbs is a collection of puzzles and paradoxes. Without Him these dark sayings prove Solomon almost a greater taskmaster than Moses. Ah! blessed be God, the Interpreter has

appeared, and from these precious proverbs He gives to the children of Zion many a sweet lesson in the language of Canaan. This Interpreter has to do with a language which earthly linguists cannot touch. The reprobate Pilate could translate from Greek into Hebrew, and from Hebrew into Latin (Luke xxiii. 38), but our Interpreter opens up the dark sayings of His own Book in Heaven's own language—the language of the redeemed sinner's need, the language which speaks an abundant supply according to JEHOVAH'S riches in glory by Jesus Christ.

Let us look at the text.

"But!" This word throws it in striking contrast with something stated immediately before. Look at ver. 14: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence." If you want moral maxims, here are some most excellent for fast young men in these days of degeneracy and profligacy. Though, mark you, moral maxims may suit hypocrites and proud professors, but the power of the Holy Ghost will alone satisfy the living children of God. "But!" Here we see the contrast between the two paths—the path to eternal perdition, and the path to eternal glory; the path leading to the grip of Satan, the other to the everlasting and unceasing embrace of a covenant-God and Father; the one leading to holiness, happiness, and heaven, the other to corruption, death, and damnation. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." As we search through God's blessed Book we find this path described in a variety of ways.

In the sermon on the mount, that remarkable exposition of the spirituality of the Divine law, we find two gates, two ways. See Matt. vii. 13, 14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Look again at Job xxviii. 7, 8: "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen. The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." See! Satan's brood cannot tread that path, such are ignorant of it, and go gaily on their way to eternal destruction. The vulture's eye sees not the path to glory. The vulture, according to the law of Moses, was an unclean bird, typical of all unclean professors from that day to the end of time; so, then, no unclean professor, however high he may soar in the regions of Scriptural knowledge and religious attainment, can for a moment see and enjoy the hidden mysteries of this path. Balaam, with marvellous light in his head and eloquence on his

tongue, might behold wonders from the tops of the rocks ; but he remained totally ignorant of the way to the heart of a covenant God in Christ. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man ; but the end thereof are the ways of death " (Prov. xvi. 25). If I were standing here as a mere moralist, I might expatiate on the evils of debauchery, immorality, and profligacy, and spend my time in seeking the outward reformation of the masses ; but having been led into the depths of inbred corruption and uncleanness, I cannot waste my energies and compromise my commission in cleansing and adorning the religious exterior while the interior spiritually is corruption itself, and the cleansed and adorned one must go to the depths of hell with a lie in his right hand. The Gospel of the grace of God teaches elect ones to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Where do we find such incentives against sin as those found in the revelation of the terrible sufferings of the sinless Saviour on Calvary's bloody tree ? Objectors to the truth of Divine sovereignty may start up and ask, " Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound ? " But the true-born child of God hurls back the hellish suggestion with, " God forbid ! How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein ? " while it is gloriously true that where sin abounded grace did much more abound.

But, the path of the just is a narrow one. How broad is it ? What are its bounds ? See ! So narrow, that none but Christ can truly walk therein. It is a holy path, and there is none holy but the Lord. It is a living path, and there is no life but in Christ. Where is the just ? " There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." Where is the path of the just ? He who is truly the Just One is also the Path in whom we walk. The first man Adam was made perfect, upright ; but in the development of the Divine purposes, the introduction of evil into this world became a certain and a startling fact. This is a marvellous mystery, before which God-wrought faith bows with profound reverence, and waits until all is explained above. In our finite capacity, and with our poor, weak stretch of mind, we cannot comprehend the secret things which belong unto the LORD our God, but as He communicates His secrets, and opens up His glorious counsels, new and Divine delights seize our hearts, causing us to glory in Him our covenant God and Lord. Many imagine that when Adam sinned, being questioned by the Eternal Word, he threw the blame of his act upon God and Eve. Ah, my friends, Adam did nothing of the kind. Adam, the figure of Him who was to come, stood trembling before the Eternal Word, for He it was who sought Adam in the cool of the day, and found him behind the trees of the garden. He called to Adam, not to Eve, " Where art thou ? " And when before assembled worlds the last Adam shall appear, His Eve shall hear Him say, " Here am I, and she whose sins I bore and

whose responsibility I took upon Myself is here, righteous in My righteousness, comely in My comeliness, accepted in Me." Our first father Adam laid not the blame upon his Eve. He confessed unreservedly his sin in a plain statement of the facts—"The woman whom Thou gavest with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." The woman hesitated not, when confronted, but said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Can anything be plainer? This is a marvellous type of Christ and His Church! O how gloriously does the last Adam, our most glorious Christ, appear, as He takes to Himself every sin, every charge, every accusation which may be laid against His Church, and puts them for ever away, while He cleaves to her His own loved wife and hates to put away. But in Adam the first we see sin, guilt, shame, and condemnation. He begat a son in his own likeness, not in the image of God, for, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Adam's sons and daughters are all corrupt, depraved, unrighteous. Look at Gen. vi. 5: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil and that continually." Mark! Only evil, always evil. This is universal, total depravity. Imaginations, thoughts, purposes, desires of man's heart *only* evil, without one redeeming feature or compensating quality. Moral improvements, educational advantages, religious observances, effect no change before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Only evil, continually evil, never anything else but evil, is God's judgment concerning universal man.

Turn with me and glance at the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. The first chapter gives an awful description of the Gentile world; yet not more awful than true. So frightful is the account given, that to read it in a mixed congregation must bring the crimson blush of shame to one's cheek. The second chapter displays religious man with all the privileges, rites, ceremonies, and so-called means that God could bestow upon him. And what was the religious Jew as he stood fortified with the rites of his religion, but destitute of the grace of God? Simply a spangled hypocrite, an enemy of God. Now, look at the third chapter and ninth verse: "We have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." Now, he had not *proved* anything of the kind, but as you read in the margin of this verse, he had *charged* them as being all under sin. He then proceeds in a string of quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures to prove the charge. And, what a picture! Philosophers, philanthropists, political economists, prelates, priests, princes, and plebeians, all ignore and discard it. Yet, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." Listen to the wise man: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccles. vii. 29). Such is the perversity of human nature, that,

if man has not a way to sin ready at hand, he will invent one. I look at sin according to God's estimate and judgment thereof. What is sin? Anything and everything, thought, look, word or action, apart from Christ. It does not matter whether a man be pious or profane, religious or irreligious, his actions, though virtues in the eyes of his fellow-men, if they flow not from union with the Lord Jesus Christ, are nothing more to Him than the most horrible vices. Where is the just? Among the progeny of Adam he cannot be found. Where is the just man that doeth good and sinneth not? He is found in the person of Jesus. JESUS is that just One. He is just in His thoughts, looks, words, and works. JEHOVAH has wrought a miracle of grace, for that unclean thing, Mary, has brought forth that clean JESUS. Mark well the words of Gabriel to that highly-favoured, yet sinful, woman: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). Jesus was born through Divine interposition, and not by natural generation. Human impossibilities became more than Divine possibilities, and in this instance we see a glorious fact. Yes, Mary, the unclean sinner, by Divine grace and power, brought forth the Holy Child Jesus.

Have you not noticed the controversy which has raged upon this point? That exalted, yet contemptible, blasphemer, the present Pope, can dogmatize, with all the slime of the serpent, upon the immaculate conception of Mary; but, let Mary speak for herself, and she proves the Pope a liar. Listen! Mary speaks, and her testimony is sweet and precious to the hearts of those who are spiritually one with her, but hidden from those who own her as queen of heaven:—"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Mary's eyes were enlightened to acknowledge her Son to be her King and Lord, and to see in that Holy Thing which was born of her, her Saviour and her God. The poor Irish child hit the mark when he said, "It was Jesus in the heart and not in the womb of Mary that she rejoiced in as her salvation." It is fearful to contemplate the height of audacity and presumption to which that awful apostate Manning has attained, and to which in the pride and enmity of his heart he has been lifted by the devil, in arrogating for Mary equality in salvation and mediation with Him whose name is above every name in heaven, earth, and hell. Look at that terrible declaration of the Holy Ghost by Paul: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii. 11, 12). Manning and his tribe are in that fearful God-sent delusion, and its doom must be accomplished in all those for whom JEHOVAH in His invincible grace interposes not.

Blessed be God, the Just One has appeared. He could ever look up in the face of the Father and say, without hesitancy or reserve, "I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29). Yes, He was just, righteous, holy, perfect, in every step of that path of righteousness and rectitude which infinite wisdom designed for Him to walk in. Perfect resignation and acquiescence to His Father's will characterizes Him. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself." That is what we cannot do; but, blessed be God, we are humbled when, by the power of God the Holy Ghost, we have revealed in us His sweet humility. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." From the first sigh on His virgin mother's breast, to the last groan upon Calvary's bloody tree, we see pure, unsullied obedience to the law and to God—an obedience which, one has well said, an angel's tear would soil. Ah, my friends, this is glorious. Listen!

"How glorious was the work He wrought,  
While dwelling on this earthly globe;  
When each good deed, and each pure thought,  
Conspired to weave our spotless robe.

Thus Jesus wrought our righteousness,  
Our guilt sustained, our sorrows bore,  
Secured our everlasting peace,  
And triumphed o'er the serpent's power."

"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). The obedience required by the law He has given, the satisfaction for sin, which it demanded, He has presented on behalf of His Church and people. Each one is brought by the Holy Ghost to confess: "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. xlv. 24): and the Word declares, for the comfort of all who hunger and thirst after righteousness, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa. xlv. 25). He, Himself the Righteous One, is the righteousness of His people, and they are taught that precious truth, "For He hath made Him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). "Of God!" Before the worlds were framed, the whole election of grace were in Christ Jesus.

"Then, in the glass of His decrees,  
Christ and His Bride appear'd as one:  
Her sins, by imputation, His,  
While she in spotless splendour shone."

"Of God!" By pure regenerating grace are they in Him justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses, perfect in Christ Jesus, "accepted in the Beloved," "Complete in Him." Is His name THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS? (Jer. xxiii. 6.) This is the name where-with she shall be called, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. xxxiii.). Does our glorious Emmanuel stand at this moment before God without spot or wrinkle? He is there



for us and as we: "For as He is so we are in this world." Perfect! Complete! We may mourn over our sinfulness and shortcomings, but this affects not our state in Him. "There is not a justified man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not," and "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Yet, in Him, though sinning, we're free from all sin. Now, all those who are "made the righteousness of God in Him," those to whom He says, by the power and grace of His Spirit, "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee," have a path mapped out for them in which they must walk. What is this path? Rather ask, Who is this path? Listen! "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John xiv. 6). "I am the Way" in which My people walk. "I am the Truth" through which they are guided. "I am the Life" by whom they are preserved. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Col. ii. 6). Do you see the path into which all the elect of God are guided, and in which all the redeemed must walk? This path is Christ, the Accomplisher of God's purposes of grace in and for the loved ones of His heart. Christ, the Performer of the Father's promises; Christ, the Sustainer of the Father's glory; Christ, the Exponent of the Father's will; Christ, the Revealer of the Father's secrets; Christ, the Way, and the only Way, to the Father's heart. Papists and heretics point to other ways, but all end in death and damnation. Mark this well! "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we *must* be saved" (Acts iv. 12). It is not whereby we may; but whereby we must. Glorious certainty!

Well, now, having "received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Are you in Him? In Him, as the path of life, ye are not dead. In Him, the way of peace, ye are not now enemies to God. In Him, as the way of holiness, ye are holy in Him. Mark! Here we have to do with Christ, the Path in whom we walk. Do we walk? Sometimes we halt and limp like Jacob; but He hears our cry, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe" (Psa. cxix. 117). Sometimes we stumble and fall in the darkness; yet the cry ascends to Him, "Make Thy way plain before my face." Sometimes we are faint and weary, and cannot take a single step, He then gently picks me up and carries me in His arms of love. But sometimes I wander from Him I love, yet still He forsakes me not, but reveals Himself to me as my Great and Glorious, Faithful and Merciful, Succouring and Sympathising High-Priest, "Who can have compassion upon the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Oh, what a rich and unspeakable mercy to know that we are in the arms of a carrying God!

"The path of the just is as the shining light." "The shining light!" What is it? That which appears amidst the darkness and gloom which oftentimes surrounds the way-worn pilgrim and stranger. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. lx. 1). Good old Simeon, who had waited long to see the Lord Christ, as he took the Babe in his arms, saw in Him, "A Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of God's people Israel" (Luke ii. 32). Christ is the True Light through which the Divine counsels, communications, and comforts flow to the waiters and enquirers at Zion's gates. Light! The grandest figure employed by the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures of truth to show forth the glories of JEHOVAH-JESUS. Snow is white and beautiful, but it tarries not long, and the faintest touch soils and mars its beauty. In the first creation God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." In the new creation, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). This light which shines above the glory of the sun can never be sullied, its rays dart through fogs and vapours dense and dark, through regions of corruption, yet contract no defilement. God's Son is the "brightness of His glory and the express image of His person" (Heb. i. 3). He is the bright Morning Star and glorious Sun of Righteousness to His beloved Church and people. Ay, and when He shines into the heart, darkness flies away, doubts disappear, and we experience a morning without clouds, a season of clear shining after rain. Blessed be God, there is no cloud of sin, ignorance, corruption, or pollution to be seen in Him.

"In darkest shades, if He appear,  
My dawning is begun;  
He is my soul's bright Morning Star,  
And He my Rising Sun."

But "the Path of the just is as the shining Light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Mark those words, "*that shineth more and more.*" I think I hear an anxious soul exclaim, "That shining more and more has greatly puzzled and perplexed me, for I find, instead of shining more and more, I grow darker and darker!" Thank God for that! for as assuredly as God's Christ is thy Light and thy glory,

"The more His glories strike thine eye,  
The humbler thou shalt lie."

My heart sickens to hear so much of that vile rubbish, perfection in the flesh, progressive sanctification, holiness of faith. Why, my dear friends, there is as much of these things to be found in the devil as can be found in us. This portion of God's revelation to the elect is a glorious declaration of what Christ is and what He will be again and again to those who often walk in

darkness and in the shadow of death. He who is the Path is also the Light in which His brethren walk. Is Christ in me a well of water? It will "bubble up," and spring up into everlasting life. Is He the Incorruptible Seed sown in the honest and good heart of God's own giving? It shall, in spite of rough winds and stormy weather, bring forth fruit unto life eternal. Is He the Smoking Flax? Blessed be His dear name, the smoke shall disappear in everlasting flames of Light, and Life, and Love. Look at that glorious description of the love of God in Christ Jesus to sinners and enemies in Rom. v. 8, 9: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." O what a sweet and heavenly ray of light that brings into the living sinner's soul. Christ died for me! This is the discovery of the Path, but new beauties shall be revealed and increasing light shall be thrown upon it. Read the ninth verse: "Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." What life? Not His life of perfect obedience here upon earth in which we are eternally justified; but the risen life of all-prevalent intercession before the face of the Father for us. His soul was made in death an offering for sin; and the promise was fulfilled: "He shall prolong His days." In His glorious resurrection and ascension with great triumph into His kingdom in heaven we see the "*much more*;" ay, the "*more and more*." He pleads! He asks! He demands! He commands! "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me;" for "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). Though the devil and all his brood may roar against it, our glorious Intercessor shall possess the fruit of the travail of His soul.

"*More and more*." This was God's order in creation. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" but *six* successive days were occupied in forming, fashioning, and adorning that which was created by His word. On the sixth day God in counsel said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him: male and female created He them" (Gen. i. 26, 27). Man in the image of God was the perfection of the first creation. Man elect, redeemed, and regenerate, conformed to the image of God's Son, is the perfection of the new creation. See! "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the

knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature or age, of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 8—13). JEHOVAH works by gradual process, not for the improvement of old nature which is unimproveable; but for the revelation and development of His own work of grace in the hearts of His eternally loved people. Oh, how blessed it is for us to know, by the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, that the Father's model and estimate of perfection is His own most glorious Christ! and in the development of this in the understanding and affections of His children neither failure, flaw, nor imperfection can be found.

"*More and more!*" See how gloriously this is seen in the erection and completion of that spiritual temple in which JEHOVAH in His Trinity of Persons is everlastingly and unceasingly worshipped and glorified. Stone by stone. The elect are gathered, not in crowds, but one by one. "I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion" (Jer. iii. 14). "They go from strength to strength (*margin, from company to company*), every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psa. lxxxiv. 7). Yes, Christ the First-fruits, is presented before the throne, and the harvest of redeemed sinners in the various seasons shall come, *more and more* they appear, until the ransomed number is complete.

But let me direct your attention to that precious portion in Rom. viii.: "It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Does not that look like the path shining "*more and more!*"

"All fulness dwells in Thee, Lord;  
Thy rich and glorious grace,  
Thou hast bestowed on me, Lord,  
A sinner vile and base.  
All fulness of affection  
Thou hast so freely shown,  
For sovereign, free election  
Has made me Thine alone."

Yes, "of His fulness have all we received and *grace for grace*" (John i. 16). Grace received is the earnest and pledge of more glorious things to come, and self will be loathed, Jesus, in His love, blood, righteousness, covenant, and salvation will become increasingly precious, and His beauties shine more and more unto the perfect day.

When the King-Shepherd shall have gathered in His own sheep; when

"—all the ransom'd Church of God  
Is saved to sin no more;"

when the whole election of grace shall stand without spot before the throne, and not a hoof is left behind, then shall come to pass, in all its fulness and blessedness, that promise of the Father to the Church, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither

for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting Light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isaiah lx. 19, 20). Zion's pilgrims having plodded every step of their predestined pathway, enjoy the perfect day for which their anxious hearts oftentimes longed and sighed. It will be a glorious morning without clouds when our ransomed spirits shall enter into full possession of the glory reserved for us from the days of eternity. Then we shall enjoy full salvation—salvation not only in the *purpose* of the Father, the *purchase* of the Son, and the power of the Holy Ghost, but in the unclouded presence of the glorious Three-in-One with exceeding joy. O precious truth! glorious earnest! Fellow pilgrim, thy heart may be sad with Satan's temptations, and ache through the many trials and disappointments which meet thee in the way, yet He will cause thee to sing, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm xxvii. 1).

"*The Path of the just is as the shining light,*" and He shall shine *more and more*, sweetly revealing the love of the Father's heart, unfolding the glories of the covenant, and displaying His rich and distinguishing grace, until the perfect day of unclouded glory arrives, when we shall bow before Him and serve Him with unsinning heart for ever and for ever.

May JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost command His blessing upon us. Amen, and Amen.

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#### HYMN.

"SHOW me Thy glory," dearest Lord,  
Which shines in Jesus' face;  
A view of cov'nant love afford,  
To subjects of Thy grace.

"Show me Thy glory" in the plan  
Which makes salvation free:  
"Show me Thy glory" in the Man  
Who liv'd and died for me.

Within that Rock where Thou art seen  
Thy glory, Lord, unfold,  
T'ntil, without a cloud between,  
Thy glory I behold.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## THE GOD-PLEASER.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
MAY 25TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even His enemies to be at peace with Him."—Prov. xvi. 7.

**T**HERE are many portions of God's most Holy Word which put even the deeply taught and the highly favoured in the household of God to their studies. Contradictions seem to abound in them, and when viewed in the light of other parts of the written Word, and considered according to their own personal experience, truth seems to be afar off. Such a portion we have in the words I have read for you by way of text. Many of God's poor children are staggered by it, and know not how to understand the mind and will of God therein. From it truth has not been spoken home to their heart by the power of God the ever-blessed Spirit, neither has God's light been thrown upon it to guide their weary spirits into the way of truth. Certainly much that is true may be arrived at by comparing it with illustrative portions of Holy Scripture, but the truth of the text appears not. It is one thing to read the truth of the Book, and another thing altogether to have the truth read therefrom to our hearts by the great Teacher who leads His scholars into all essential truth—that is, all the truth necessary for them to know, designed in covenant before the worlds were framed, entrusted to the care of the responsible One, to be communicated to their spiritual understandings by His grace, power, and indwelling.

Much that is interesting appears on the surface of the text to the mere Bible student, but the living child of God who has been brought into dire conflict with the powers of darkness, ignorance, and error, prays to know something more than the mere collation of like portions to elucidate the meaning thereof.

No. 131.—PRICE ONE PENNY.

It may here prove instructive to point out a few instances which seem to explain the text. Turn to Gen. xxvi. 26: "And Abimelech went to *Isaac* from Gerar, and Ahuzzuth one of his friends, and Pichol the chief captain of his army. And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace; thou art now the blessed of the LORD." This portion, at first sight, appears to illustrate the meaning of our text. We see the same in the case of Jacob and his brother Esau. Dreading death at the hands of Esau, he fled from his father's house. His gracious Guardian, His redeeming Angel kept and befriended him in all places whithersoever he went. At length, Esau approaches, when Jacob in deep distress of soul commits himself and his dear ones to the kind care and keeping of his father's God. Come with me to Gen. xxxii. 9—11: "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies, and of all Thy truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother, with the children." Now look at the description given of the meeting of Jacob and Esau in chapter xxxiii. 1—5: "And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindmost. And he passed over before them, and he bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children: and said, Who are these with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant." God was better to him than all his fears, and made his enemy to be at peace with him.

Joseph's history reveals the same truth. Though he was hated and cast out by his brethren, he found grace in the eyes of Potiphar, in the eyes of his gaoler, and in the eyes of Pharaoh. But in all this we see a greater than Joseph. Now turn to Jeremiah xv. 10, 11, where we have his doleful ditty, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of

strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth? I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury: yet every one of them doth curse me." Now listen to the Lord's answer to His complaining prophet, "Verily it shall be well with the remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction." Read the first chapter of Daniel and you will see him and his three companions finding favour in the eyes of Melzar the king's steward. "Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs."

But when we look at the text in the light of our own heart's experience, and the solemn declarations of God's written Word, I ask, Where are we? Look at the experiences of the very persons whose cases I have enumerated. When Jacob's ways pleased the Lord, Laban sought to do him evil. When Joseph's ways pleased the Lord, he was hated by his brethren, cast into prison, and the iron entered into his soul. When the ways of the three Hebrew children pleased the Lord, they were cast into the burning fiery furnace. When Daniel's ways pleased the Lord, he was thrown into the den of lions. When Jesus' ways pleased the Lord, He was despised and rejected of men, cast out and crucified. When the ways of God's elect prove them to be His friends, the world is sure to manifest its enmity against them (James iv. 4). O the marvellous wonders of Divine providence! Cowper might well sing,—

"God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform."

The mysteries of His providence and grace, and the varied workings of His hand are only opened up and explained to those who experience fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. Now we will look at a few portions of God's written Word which appear to run counter to the first view of the text. Turn with me to John xv. 18, 19: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." This was as much as to say, If you were of the world, the world would be at peace with you; but My choice of you is demonstrative proof that My Father is well pleased with you, therefore the world cannot be at peace with you. Look again, John xvii. 14: "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Now turn to Matt. v. 11, 12: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Here I would ask, How can we harmonise these declarations of the



Saviour with the words of Solomon, "When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with Him?"

Well, you know my mind in reference to every portion of God's most Holy Word. Each leads directly or indirectly to the Lord Jesus Christ. The other night my mind was led with an irresistible sweetness to these words. In them I saw the beauty and preciousness of Jesus in such a sacred light as I rarely see Him in the book of Proverbs. Here I saw Him as my own God and Saviour in the glory of His person, the perfection of His salvation, the sympathy of His heart, and the prevalency of His intercession for His own. I do not say this is a type of Him, but somehow or other I can see Him here revealed. In humble dependence upon the teaching of Him who loves to glorify and exalt God's Christ, we will look at the text according to the following arrangement:—

I.—A MAN—Who is He?

II.—HIS WAYS—"When a Man's ways please the LORD."

III.—HIS ENEMIES—Who are they?"

IV.—THEIR PEACE—What is it?

I.—A MAN—Who is He? We are not left long in doubt, for Hart blessedly brings Him to view in that precious hymn,—

"A Man there is, a real Man,  
With wounds still gaping wide,  
From which rich streams of blood once ran,  
In hands, and feet, and side.

This wondrous Man, of whom we tell,  
Is true Almighty God;  
He bought our souls from death and hell;  
The price, His own heart's blood.

That human heart He still retains,  
Though throned in highest bliss;  
And feels each tempted member's pains;  
For our affliction's His."

There we have the Man. But mark! While, as the weary Workman, He passed a life of sorrow and suffering here below, He was the Mighty God as well. He who was Man of His mother born in the world, was also God of His Father before all worlds. He who was borne upon His virgin mother's breast, was, at the same time, the Sustainer and Upholder of all things. But why the necessity for this wondrous union of the Godhead and Manhood of Christ? The necessity lay in this very fact: God, in the beginning, created man pure and innocent; but man fell into sin, and the fair beauty in which he was formed was fearfully defaced. Look at this according to the testimony of Solomon in Eccles. vii. 29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." The meaning of this is: If man has not a way of sinning against God ready made to his hand, his sinful ingenuity is such that he will invent one. Universally corrupt

and totally depraved man, ever sinning against his God, is subject to His judgment, which is, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," and "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10). Elect men in union with Adam the first are under the curse and condemnation of JEHOVAH'S righteous law, yet, in the set time to favour Zion, they are brought by the convincing power of God the Holy Ghost to a knowledge of their sinfulness and wretchedness, and, prostrate before the footstool of JEHOVAH, they confess their vileness, and despair of ever entering His sacred presence with acceptance and in peace.

But God, in the riches of His grace, in the everlasting covenant of love before all worlds, designed the means whereby His banished ones should not be eternally expelled from Him. His Son, according to that covenant, must identify Himself in flesh and blood with the people of His Father's choice. See Hebrews ii. 13, 14: "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." See also Romans viii. 3: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son *in the likeness* of sinful flesh, and *by a sacrifice for sin*, condemned sin in the flesh." We contemplate the mystery of His holy incarnation in the declaration of the angel to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). In this we see God and Man in one Christ. The Divine and human natures united never more to be divided. We see not our Lord Jesus Christ leaving the glory of His Godhead behind Him in the skies, He yields not up His attributes of Deity for a time, but comes to earth with all His glory, veiling it with His apparently weak, infirm, and helpless human nature. Look at Him through all His pilgrim journey here upon earth. The two natures are seen again and again. At Samaria's well He sat a weary, lonely Man, but as the Mighty God He conferred eternal life upon a poor sinful harlot. In the vessel, beset with no small tempest upon Tiberia's lake, we see the weary Workman fast asleep. The roar of the boisterous elements awake Him not, but the moment the cry of distress flows from the anxious hearts of His disciples—"Master, carest Thou not that we perish?"—He is up in a moment displaying the greatness of His Godhead by dropping His word of omnipotence in the raging waters, and there was a great calm. Look at Him in the garden (John xviii. 1—8) the despised, hated, and persecuted Man. He said unto His persecutors, I AM. The moment these dread words, which declared Him to be the great and eternal JEHOVAH, fell from His sacred lips, "they went backward and fell to the

ground." There we see, in the Lord Jesus Christ, both God and Man. I love to contemplate Him as He is revealed in the Gospels of Matthew and John under these two titles: "The Son of Man" and "The Son of God." As the Son of Man, He appears in perfect identification with His brethren. As the Son of God, He is seen in His unceasing oneness with the Father. As God and Man, He reveals the eternal relationship existing between the Father and His elect children. Matthew xxv. 31 says, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory." Mark, it does not say the Son of God, but the Son of Man. The meek and lowly One who had felt all the persecutions and sorrows of His members, will then acknowledge them as His own, and settle matters with their adversaries. Look at John v. 27: "And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." Now I used to misquote that Scripture, and say, "*Because He is the Son of God.*" That was natural; but the spiritual declaration is, "Because He is the Son of Man." As the Son of Man, He learned in the school of human suffering how to execute judgment or true discernment in every case of His people's necessities, wants, and perplexities.

"In every pang that rends the heart,  
The Man of sorrows bears a part;  
He sympathises with our grief,  
And brings the suffering saint relief."

As Man, He obeyed God's righteous law, suffered its dread death penalty. As God, He gave an infinite worth to His obedience and sufferings. As the God-Man Mediator and Surety, He rendered to His Father a perfect obedience to every precept of His law, perfect acquiescence to every thought of His heart, perfect submission to every decree of His covenant, and thus perfectly satisfy His outraged justice, holiness, and truth. This brings us to consider,—

II.—HIS WAYS—"When a Man's ways please the LORD." Look at His ways in covenant before the worlds were framed. His goings forth as the Head of the Church, and holding Himself responsible for His people's salvation, were ineffably pleasing to the eyes and heart of His Father. All His ways from the heights of glory to death's dark gloom, from the manger in Bethlehem to the mansion in the skies, were pleasing to Him that appointed Him. Read the Father's estimate of Him as given in Isaiah xlii. 1: "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold, Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth." Listen to His declaration concerning Him after His baptism: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). On Tabor's mount, amid the glories of His transfiguration, the same voice was heard, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matt. xvii. 5). Come with me to

John viii. 28, 29, where the sinless Servant, speaking to those who would have proved Him a sinner of the deepest dye, says, "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I AM"—the word "*he*" is in italics—"and I do nothing of Myself; but as the Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for *I do always those things that please Him.*" This was, and is, gloriously true. Perfect conformity to every jot and tittle of JEHOVAH'S righteous law was seen in the will, walk, and ways of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did God declare, "Thou shalt have no other gods but Me?" Look at the whole life of the Surety of the covenant; listen to the words which fall from His grace-filled lips; notice the looks which flow from His affectionate eyes; mark well every act of His body, whether to friend or foe, and you will find in all, perfect resignation and acquiescence to the mind and will of His Father. This is revealed in that mysterious verse (John iii. 13) where Christ, speaking to Nicodemus, says, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." Now, mark you, as the Son of Man corporeally, He was not in heaven, but upon earth conversing with Nicodemus. How was He then in heaven? In His thoughts, purposes, desires, and determinations. He was the Father's righteous Servant and faithful Steward all the way through His sojourn upon earth. He wavered not nor swerved in His pathway of perfect obedience. Let me ask you one question—Do servants, as a rule, work the same in the absence as in the presence of their employers? We know very well they do not. But our blessed Lord, from the first moment He was made under the law to that when He cried, "It is finished," yielded a cheerful, willing obedience, and acted in perfect conformity to the mind, will, law, and commands of His God and Father. Look again: "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image." His worship was spiritual from first to last, and the whole of the acceptable worship of His members is in spiritual oneness with Him. "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain." Was that spoken to Jesus? Certainly it was. And every time He took the Father's name upon His sacred lips on behalf of His people, His pleas are heard, His prayers are answered, His demands are complied with. He takes not the name of the Father in vain. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." This He did, but not according to Sabbatarian notions. Pharisaic punctiliousness accused Him with the want of Sabbath observance when fault was found with His disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day. Jesus found not fault with them, but kept a perpetual Sabbath day for them in the eyes of His Father. Go through the whole of the Decalogue, mark well every commandment, and you will find that in respect to each, Satan assaulted

Him with the intention of disappointing the purpose of the Father, defeating the Son in His work of salvation, and disgracing the Holy Ghost. Our Jesus, God's most glorious Christ, was a real Man, a Man obeying, bleeding, suffering, and dying on the behalf of His people; a Man dead and buried, and rising from the tomb displaying His power over death and the grave; a Man entering heaven's highest glory, representing His redeemed ones here, and holding in undisturbed possession for them their appointed place of bliss and blessedness. Here we may sing those glorious lines of Mushett's:—

“The Man who lived, and died, and rose  
To perfume heaven with blood;  
To Him my soul her pardon owes,  
And claims Him for her God.

There high He reigns in ether bright,  
The great Incarnate Word,  
While suns to darkness dwindle quite  
Before their radiant Lord.

Thence low He stoops to watch the lot  
Of souls to Him once given;  
And makes the dying sinner's cot  
The glorious gate of heaven.”

There we see the Man whose ways always please the Lord. And here I may ask the question, “When do our ways please Him?” Do we ever arrive at that point of spiritual gratification and satisfaction to compliment ourselves with the idea that we have been pleasing to the Lord? If we do, we shall be driven from it. In every place of worship in connection with the Establishment, this morning, the confession has gone forth from the lips, and in some cases from the heart: “We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us.” The very same confession which was made last Sunday will be made next, ay, and every Sunday up to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. Our daily confession is, “Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight” (Psa. li. 4). Every living child of God brought by the power of God the Holy Ghost into the inner sanctuary, to bow before the King either in public or in private, with the saints or with God alone, confesses, “I have not pleased Thee.”

How can man by his own acts please God? We know it is fact that man by Adam's transgression, by the desire and determination of his nature, can do nothing but manifest a spirit altogether opposite to that which dwelt pre-eminently in the Man Christ Jesus. How, then, can man's ways please the Lord? Look at him in any way you like, what can he do to please God? Be he religious or irreligious, left to himself, his will, his works, his ways are perfectly opposed to that great and glorious God to whom he owes his being and every blessing. Turn with me

to Micah vi. 6, 7: "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" No. He has taught us that everything we present to Him apart from living oneness with a precious Christ, can only meet with His frown, and with His sentence of eternal disapproval. The more religious our fleshly offerings are, the more hateful they appear to Him. If you do not believe that, turn with me to Isa. i. 11: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." If this be all that religion can do for a man, where is he whose ways can please the Lord? We who have been taught to judge ourselves in the light of the Divine perfections, and measure ourselves by the standard of unswerving rectitude, know full well that such a man apart from Christ cannot be found.

But this is the glory and grandeur of God's Gospel, the Man Christ, in all His ways of humiliation, sorrow, temptation, trial, and tribulation, was ever pleasing to His Father. It matters not where He was seen, the fiercer the furnace the brighter His perfections shone, while the Father delighted to express His unceasing and ineffable pleasure in Him and in His glorious work. From Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross this now exalted Man pleased the Lord. The holy Child at Bethlehem, the obedient youth at Nazareth, the righteous Man throughout a life of sorrow and suffering pleased the Lord in all things. When assailed and tempted by the devil in the wilderness, "It is written" distinguished every word and deed. See how Paul describes Him in Heb. x. 5: "Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that He may establish the second." Look at the same portion as it appears in Psa. xl. 7, 8: "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of

Me. I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart," or, "*in the midst of My bowels.*" Here He expresses His yearning desire and determination to do the Father's will perfectly from first to last for His people. In His temptations He met and defeated Satan's designs with words not only written by holy men of old, but inscribed by the Holy Ghost in His own heart's experience. Trace Him through life to the judgment hall, and to Calvary's bloody tree, and there you see Him as the meek and lowly One; for "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth." At the close of His earthly existence He presented to the Father a perfect obedience with the words, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii. 4). JEHOVAH rejoiced—heaven was filled with acclamation—hell was confounded—and the whole election of grace saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. This Man's ways pleased the Lord, and, blessings rest upon His sacred Head, His ways, so pleasing to the Father, in intercession and blessing have not ceased. Look at that blessed testimony in John xi. 41, 42: "And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, and I knew that Thou hearest Me always." He ever lives to plead for His people, and to claim Heaven's choicest blessings for them. See John xvii. 24: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." He sends His blessed Spirit to convince His elect and redeemed ones of sin in them and righteousness in Him, and bring them in a heartfelt knowledge of Himself as the God-Pleaser, the Saviour, Lover, Husband, and All in all, of His people.

III.—HIS ENEMIES. Who are they? When this Man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even His enemies to be at peace with Him. When the good pleasure of the Lord is manifested to an elect and redeemed soul for the first time, that soul feels himself to be anything but a friend of the Lord. According to every portion of the New Testament Scriptures which refers to that glorious truth, reconciliation, man is set forth as an enemy of God. Turn with me to Rom. v. 10: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Look also at Col. i. 21: "And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." Mark well Eph. ii. 2, 3: "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Whose disobedience? Not God's. "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of

the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath." Whose wrath? Not God's. To His children He has none. He is a God of everlasting love. See Titus iii. 3: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Notice that description of man in Rom. vii. 7: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It is a glorious fact that the Man whose ways please the Lord makes all those whom He redeemed with His most precious blood, and who, by nature, are His enemies, to be at peace with Him. Look at that blessed testimony which played about my heart for many a long day, and why it should do so is a mystery to me: "He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in a house"—that is, in His own house—"whose house are we." We, who were alienated and enemies in our mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled, in the body of His flesh through death, to present us "holy" in the Father's election, "and unblameable" in His own redeeming work, "and unreprouvable" by the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit. He knows how to slay His people's enmity with love, and make them be at peace with Him.

IV.—THEIR PEACE. What is it? Look at the testimony of one who was an enemy of Christ with a will. Like an infuriated wild beast he belched out threatenings and slaughter against the Christ and Church of God. Acts xxvi. 9: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests, at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Wish you for a declaration of his enmity against the Church of God? Turn to chap. xxii. 19, 20: "Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Thy



martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." Here was an enemy exceeding mad against that way. What way? God's way in Christ of reconciling enemies to Himself. He appears to have been a very devil, tormenting the saints until they blasphemed. Do you think you could find such a description of saintship from any pulpit in the length and breadth of the British Isles? Modern preachers are not so honest as Paul was made by the grace and indwelling of God the Holy Ghost. He declared that he was so cruel and fiendish an enemy of God's Christ as to cause His saints to blaspheme. Yet, in carrying out the Father's purposes of love, came to Paul, and revealed in him the glorious truth of the eternal union of the saints with Him in His mediatorial glory, and of His union to them in all the sufferings they endure. Paul's heart was taken captive by the power of covenant love, melted by the fire of Divine affection, and moulded into experimental oneness with the Man whose ways pleased the Lord for him. From that moment Saul the persecutor became Paul the persecuted. The peace of God reigned and ruled in his heart, and as Paul's ways pleased the Lord, he was hated, despised, and rejected of men; but he rejoiced in the blessed fact that he was one with that blessed Man in the heavens whose ways always did and always shall please the Lord, in whom he stood eternally loved, saved, and accepted by the Father.

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

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### HYMN.

JESUS, in condescending love,  
Thus makes His grace appear;  
He left the shining realms above  
To be a Servant here.

Though Lord of heav'n, He stoops to earth  
To do His Father's will;  
Poor and despised from His birth,  
Yet Lord of glory still.

Fatigue and suffering, toil and pain,  
He, as a Servant, bore,  
That all His Church might live and reign  
With Him for evermore.

He did the work none else could do,  
Then He resum'd His throne,  
Still keeping His designs in view,  
And gath'ring in His own.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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JEHOVAH-JESUS—THE SECURITY OF ZION.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON TUESDAY EVENING,  
MARCH 9TH, 1875, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.”—Psa. xlii. 5.

WHEN, by the power of pure, sovereign, unbought, unfluenced grace we are lifted out of the regions of sin, death, the curse, and legal bondage, into the regions of salvation, life, blessing and Gospel liberty, there to see our standing and security, it is a blessed privilege to survey the various covenant promises in God's most Holy Word, and to experience their application to our hearts by the gracious power of God the Holy Ghost. It is thus we know that whatever may happen to us, for weal or for woe, nothing can separate us from His love, alienate us from His family, drag us from His loved embrace, or sever us from the affections of His heart. It is a glorious privilege to be led by the King into His kingly-palace home, to be carried by Him into the chambers of sovereign mercy, into the archives of His sovereign love, the spot where He makes known His sweet Gospel secrets, and bestows the rich sense of undisturbed security in His firm and unbending decrees; and not only in His eternal purpose, but in the blessed experience of His love. The knowledge of these glorious verities and new covenant promises has nerved and cheered the hearts of God's children in many a trying hour. Look at that man whom God by His grace made mighty indeed—Martin Luther! When some tried to dissuade him from appearing before the Diet of Worms, he declared that though there might be as many devils between him and Worms as there were tiles on the houses, he would go. In the strength of the Lord he would oftentimes cry out:—“Let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm and defy the devil.” Ah! you may depend upon it Luther sang the Psalm with a vengeance. JEHOVAH so cheered his heart by His magnani-

mous grace that he proved the ancient promise true:—"For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about." Luther, as a member of Christ's mystical body, was blest with abundant testimonies to the truth that God was his Refuge and Strength, and the glory in the midst of Zion.

"Zion stands by hills surrounded,  
Zion's kept by power divine;  
All her foes shall be confounded,  
Though the world in arms combine!  
Happy Zion!  
What a favoured lot is thine!"

It is blessed indeed when the melting season comes, after realising the keen frosts of temptation and the chilling winds of adversity in which is seen an end of all perfection, to be led into the experimental possession of the glorious promises of this Psalm. Then our hearts can sing:—"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jer. xv. 16). Yes, it is blessed to know that in the reception of God's precious truth (and this is a passive reception, even as the earth receives the rain which falls upon it), to know beyond the shadow of a doubt, by the infallible teaching of God the Holy Ghost, that grace and glory are ours; ours by covenant right and title; ours by covenant ties; ours by the unalterable word of JEHOVAH; and if that word is not sufficient to chase away our doubts, our fears, and our oftentimes accursed indifference, He will bring home His promise, ay, His exceeding great and precious promises, and not His promises alone, but He will condescend to confirm them by an oath. If a man uses an oath to confirm what he says, that man must have some hesitancy in respect to the honour of his word. "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." JEHOVAH not only comes down with His "Yea;" but, when the devil tempts, taunts, and torments, with his "Nay," and would drag down the child of God into failure, defeat, and ruin, JEHOVAH is ready to save and nigh at hand to bless. He confirms every word He has given; every promise is confirmed by His immutable oath:—"Because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." Oh, what marvellous condescension! The great and glorious JEHOVAH calling to His tried ones:—"If I accomplish not every purpose of covenant love to thee, may I, the eternal JEHOVAH, cease to exist!" So God dealt with Abraham: Abraham, who, with all his faith, was oftentimes faithless; and if this was the case with Abraham, who represented the whole election of grace from his day down to the end of time, it must be so in our experience who are following in his steps. We, who know something of temptation and tribulation, darkness and desertion, if we understand the matter rightly, need not

fear when we are brought into the depths of trouble; and yet we need; for there is a need-be for every stroke, every trial, every trouble that comes over a child of God. In each of them he will be brought to see a door opened to him for the inflowings of JEHOVAH'S grace, and for the aboundings of the sweet consolations of the "Brother born for adversity."

Peter understood something of this when he wrote to the elect strangers:—"If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Manifold temptations! What does he mean by "*manifold*?" Why, see! In a drapery establishment we have placed before us a piece of cloth (no matter what the material) to be dealt out to us; it must be unfolded. Its "many folds" must appear. It is so in the temptations which are in store for the elect, redeemed, and regenerate family of God: they shall see, know, and feel them, and acknowledge that they are all for the glory of God the Father, the exaltation of His Christ, the honour of His Spirit, the good of His people, the thwarting of the devil, filling all hell with confusion, and flooding heaven with ceaseless praise. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." What appearing? Our friends the Millenarians are looking forward, and many are losing themselves amid the dreamy regions of vain speculation; but the living child of God glories in present-tense blessings, and loves to behold the loved One of his heart appear in the full blaze of Gospel glory. See how blessedly this is unfolded by the Holy Ghost in our text:—"God is in the midst of her;" JEHOVAH in the midst of His people, and His people in the midst of Him.

"O God, our Help in ages past"—

Our Help in sovereign election before all worlds;  
Our Help in redemption on Calvary's bloody tree;  
Our Help in regeneration at the set time of favour;  
Our Help throughout our earthly pilgrimage;  
Our Help to all eternity—

"O God, our Help in ages past,  
Our Hope for years to come,  
Our Shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal Home.

Under the shadow of Thy throne  
Thy saints have dwelt secure;  
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,  
And our defence is sure."

O what a glorious Home! JEHOVAH our Help, our Hope, our Harbour, our Home! A Home for weary pilgrims who experience most keenly their outcast state away from felt union to Him. I have been much interested of late in reading the judgments which should come upon the enemies of God and His

people. See! "Moab is My washpot." God's washpot! A marvellous and strange declaration, yet glorious truth beaming forth therefrom. How is Moab God's washpot? Paul comes to our relief and informs us that God's elect are accounted the offscouring of all things; yet God will teach Moab that the filth is his, while His elect ones appear before Him without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Wherever God's Israel are found in this present evil world, there God's washpot must be. Listen! "Let Mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab." Moab, a cradle, a couch, a covert, a washpot for the people of JEHOVAH'S choice, and all secured by sovereign decree. Is it not blessed to know that in the territory of our soul's worst enemies we have peace and provision prepared to our hands and heart by the Ruler of the nations? He orders and inclines the unruly wills and affections, the dispositions and movements of the enemies of His Zion, that they may prove to be her best friends, so far as things temporal are concerned. This all flows from union with Christ, identity with Deity, oneness with our incarnate God.

I well remember, long years ago, when a lad, sitting in old St. Jude's, Manchester. The pulpit was occupied by Daniel Foley, who was afterward Regius Professor of Irish in the Dublin University. His text was:—"His name shall be called Emmanuel; which, being interpreted, is, God with us" (Matt. i. 23). "But," said Dan, "interpreted? We want the Interpreter here! The One of a thousand! He who has the eloquent speech, whose lips are full of grace. Interpreted? Yes, but not into, or from, Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. No! A reprobate Pilate could do all that. The interpretation we desire is in the language of Canaan, the language of the redeemed sinner's need. My need, and thy need, poor sinner, and blessed be God, by Him I find all my needs supplied, 'according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' God in the pulpit, God in the pew! Not in that wretched bit of paste which the Papists manufacture, worship, and eat." You will see from this how he hated the blasphemous idolatries of Popery; ay, hated the very smell of it, and *so do I*.

But what a blessed privilege to realise a *present* God! present not only in the time of trouble, in the day of adversity; but also in the day of prosperity. My heart has oftentimes thrilled as those words of England's Litany have dropped with sweetness upon my ear:—"In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth." Ah, that is it, my dear friends, our delivering God present, not only in the hours of darkness, trial, and temptation, but in the sunshine of prosperity when sweet peace smiles upon us, and not a ruffle is experienced in the conscience. An ever-present God is the glory of Zion:—"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." Her sons and daughters as refuges of hope, may be chased by the devil, chased by the curse of a

broken law, chased by a frowning world, chased by the enmity of their own evil nature, by their foolish imaginations and carnal conclusions opposed to JEHOVAH'S gracious purposes and unbending decrees, yet they fly to the Refuge, and when through weakness and weariness they cannot fly, their cry reaches His ears and heart, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." This is the Rock of eternal ages which still rears its head unmoved above all the storms of sin, corruption and condemnation. In it, in Him, the elect of God safely abide, and shall securely shelter until the tyranny of sin and Satan is for ever overpast, when our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, have wrought for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Ah!

"Rage as ye will, O ye portals of hell!  
Safe in the Rock do the ransomed ones dwell."

"Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed." When we are blessed with the experimental realisation of God in our midst, we cannot fear. Fear at such a time is an utter impossibility. Why? Because I believe? Because of the length or the strength of my faith? Oh, no! If such were the case, I should be the greatest coward in creation. It is because He is true to His covenant engagements, and to His right-royal and precious promises. He is with me a very present Help:—"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed." What are we to understand by the earth being removed? Isaiah in his fiftieth chapter and second and third verses, with Habakkuk iii. 16—18, let us into the secret. When all earth's resources fail, when creature comforts are gone, when fond hopes perish in bitter disappointment, when false friends are unmasked, and true friends are powerless to assist: everything under the sun is vanity and vexation of spirit, all human help recedes from view, the very ground cut from under my feet, then will I not fear; ay, and "though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." What mountains? Our mountains of help, comfort, enjoyment, pleasure, in which we have boasted and rejoiced, and which we fondly fancied stood strong, yet in a moment all hurled into a sea of disappointment and perplexity. Yet His presence is salvation, and His power and preciousness known and felt give a joy and peace in believing, unspeakable and Divine.

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." Streams of love, life, blood, and salvation gladden the hearts of all true Zionites. "The tabernacles of the Most High." Marvellous yet blessed expression! What are these tabernacles? See! "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1). But here we may ask Paul a question. Does not David speak of "the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High?"

Paul answers, "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. vi. 19). The body, "our earthly house of this tabernacle," the abode of our indwelling God and Friend, in which the rich, unfailing streams of unmerited, unbought grace must flow.

"God is in the midst of her." Whatever be the state or condition of God's children here, we have His unalterable testimony, and in His own set time of favour it must be sealed home to the heart by the power of God the Holy Ghost. What are we to understand by "*her*?" "*Her*" refers to God's Zion, the bride, the Lamb's wife, who, during her wanderings in these wilderness wilds, in conscious weakness, leans upon the arm of her Beloved. But sometimes His sensible presence and support are withdrawn, when trouble and surprise, weakness and anxiety are hers: she starts at the sigh of every passing wind, groans under the weight of temptation, and travels much by night. She longs for the company of her Supporter, and her anxious sigh is oft wafted heavenward and homeward:—"Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" This is the one described in Solomon's Song, that blessed Book in which my soul would always live if God would thus indulge me; but He does not, and through the wastes and wilds of Ecclesiastes I must wander and learn that everything under the sun, out of Christ, is vanity and vexation of spirit, and through this to the rich realisation of the beauty, bounty, and blessedness of the Bridegroom of my heart, as revealed in the Song of Solomon.

"God is in the midst of her." There are many precious declarations in God's blessed Word concerning His presence with His people. See Deut. xxiii. 14:—"For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy; that He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee." Well, blessed be God, our Emmanuel, having met every condition and requirement of law and justice, clothed and sheltered His own in His perfect and spotless righteousness, washed them from every stain of sin and pollution in His most precious blood, and graced them with the holiness of Himself and of His blessed Spirit, as He walks in their midst He beholds no iniquity, He sees no unclean thing: they appear holy and without blame before Him. "The King's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold." Oh, how blessed to know that He who is the righteousness of His bride is her holiness too!

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save." Mark! "*He will*," not simply *He has*—"He will save" out of every trouble, every perplexity, every conflict, emergency, and extremity, and prove to thee what a glorious, covenant, faithful God He is. "He will rest in His love;" or, as we read

in the margin, "He will *be silent* in His love." How will He be silent in His love? Listen! It was our lot last Sunday morning to dwell upon John viii. 32. We then noticed some who were not silent: they were clamorous in their hatred against the sovereign grace of God. This caused them to drag into the presence of the Friend of sinners a poor fallen woman. They would have her stoned; but He would have her saved. He stooped and wrote on the ground. What did He write? The seventh commandment? No! But He wrote something which accused and condemned those "*pious, consistent*" (?) hypocrites in their own conscience, and off they sneaked from the presence of sovereign and infinite excellency. The sigh and the cry of Zion's mourners at such a time is, "Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Thy salvation, according to Thy Word, so shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me" (Psa. cxix. 41, 42). Jesus rose and said to the woman, "Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She saith, No man, Lord." Now mark! He was silent in His love! "And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Not a reproving word from His grace-filled lips to the bride of His heart. He looks with fond affection upon the travail of His soul. Tell me, will the mother manifest a spirit of hatred and vindictiveness because of the wail of her helpless infant? Will she upbraid and reproach? Nay! She will be silent in her love, yet not silent to soothe, nor silent for her little one before the throne, that it may be an heir with her of the grace of life, and a sharer in the covenant affections of her God. So it is with a precious Christ, as He sees His weaklings in their sins, sorrows, and necessities, He does not upbraid them. No! It is—"Thomas! Mary! John! Ann! thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee; all cast into the deep sea of eternal oblivion, cast behind My back, out of My sight for ever."

"God is in the midst of her." "*Her!*" The Church, loved and elect before all worlds: the Church, fallen in the world, sought, found, recovered, lifted up in the arms of sovereign mercy. Ah! what a mercy to be lifted up experimentally out of my corruption, deadness, darkness, and desertion, to be washed in precious, atoning blood, clothed in the spotless and impeccable righteousness of my God and Saviour, fed with heavenly provision, and blest with the possession of a life which can never die, and which is known by groans Godward, hopes heavenward, and sighs Zionward. When the veil of ignorance is drawn aside, and we are favoured by the power and indwelling of God the Holy Ghost with a view of the verities of the everlasting covenant, then we behold our gracious Emmanuel taking to His home and to His heart a countless number of elect ones. In covenant His delights were with the Father and with them, and through their varied experiences His gracious promise holds good:—"I am with you, saith the Lord." See how



blessedly He cheers the heart of His twos and threes as they are scattered here and there in the wilderness:—"Where two or three are gathered together in My name!" Do notice, that "*are gathered.*" That is intensely passive, for wherever there are any to be gathered there must be a Gatherer, and in this dispensation of grace, the Gatherer is the Holy Ghost. Mark! He says not, Where two or three are gathered *I will be*; but "*I AM.*" He speaks in all the glory of His Godhead, and the loving sympathy of His manhood, "*I AM,*" God our Refuge. There I am waiting to receive you, and manifest Myself unto you. It is a blessed privilege to know and sing:—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee,  
Thy grace is almighty, preventing, and free."

Blessed are all they that wait for Him, but thrice blessed are they who find Him waiting for them. Yes, we wait for Him, for His gracious manifestations, for the sweet revelations of His love, blood, and bounty; but He is ever waiting to open up the treasures of His inexhaustible grace, and to bless us with the rich provisions of His table, and the sweet love of His heart.

"God is in the midst of her," not only collectively, but individually (see Deut. xxxii. 12). Benjamin dwells in God's heart, and God dwells in the heart of Benjamin. Nothing but a precious Christ formed in the heart the Hope of glory will truly satisfy a living soul. We may have a clear insight into the doctrines of grace, and be able to comprehend marvellous mysteries; but without Christ in my midst, Christ my life, Christ in my affections, all must end in disappointment, dissatisfaction, death, and damnation. Still further, "God is in the midst of her," not only for her comfort and consolation, but for the manifestation of the glory of Israel's covenant God. See how this was exemplified when "He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha: where they crucified Him, and two thieves with Him, on either side one, and *Jesus in the midst*" (John xix. 17, 18). That was a dreary *midst*, the midst of sin-imputed, and reproach; the midst of wrath and condemnation, the midst of darkness and desertion, the midst of that hell of confusion and consternation which we must have suffered but for the agony and bloody sweat, the cruel cross and passion, the dreadful death and burial, of our incarnate God. Jesus in the midst of my sin and shame, that He might be everlastingly endeared to my longing heart. That is a blessed hymn by Lyte:—

"Lord, I would stand with thoughtful eye  
Beneath Thy fatal tree,  
And see Thee bleed, and see Thee die,  
And think, what love to me!  
Dwell on the sight, my stony heart,  
Till every pulse within  
Shall into contrite sorrow start,  
And hate the thought of sin."

You all know that very precious hymn of Hart's on the agony and bloody sweat endured by our ever-precious and adorable Emmanuel in Gethsemane, it was the sight and experience thus described which melted him down, and lifted him up to the heights of favour and sweet acceptance. Nothing but this can conquer and triumph over wretched, rebellious me. Sweet love-visits to Gethsemane and Calvary endear our most glorious Christ to our hearts.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,  
Which, before the cross, I spend;  
Life, and health, and peace possessing,  
From the sinner's dying Friend.

Let me sit for ever viewing  
Mercy's streams in streams of blood:  
Precious drops! my soul bedewing,  
Plead and claim my peace with God."

The God, who, as Man, died for me in the midst of judgment and the wrath I so richly deserved, *that* Christ revealed to me and in me gives me a standing before and with my God from whence I can look death and hell in the face without amazement, and enjoy a peace of JEHOVAH'S own giving when storms of trouble and temptation rage around.

"God is in the midst of her," on resurrection ground. "Then the same day, at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst; and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (John xx. 19). Jesus stood in the midst! Locks, bolts, and bars are vain to keep out a precious Christ from the loved ones of His heart. Sin and the curse, and death and hell, may unite their force to separate the Head from the members, the Bridegroom from the bride; but He having made an end of sin for His own, having been made a curse for His people, having abolished death and rendered ineffectual all the designs of hell against His Church, where she is He must be, and where He is she must abide. Jesus in the midst breathes His own sweet Spirit of peace upon them, shows them His hands and His side once wounded for them, blesses them with the assurance that He is the very Christ of God their Saviour and their Friend. With such marvellous manifestations of His kindness and care, "they believed not for joy." Blessed, joyful unbelievers! Do you know what that means? It reminds me of a poor collier's wife who, when the Lord enabled me to set forth His precious Gospel from John vi. 45, raised her hands and cried in an ecstasy of delight:—"Eh, mester! it's almost too good to be true!" Ah! such seasons are too blessed, too precious to last long. To know Him and the power of His resurrection is to experience a gracious lift above the world and away from our worldly, fleshly, and devilish surroundings. Does the lifting up of His countenance upon us fill our hearts with joy

and peace in believing? See! the hidings of His face give trouble (Psa. xxx. 7). But from the midst of His disciples He is gone! Where? "And He led them out as far as to Bethany: and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke xxiv. 50, 51). Mark well the place whither our blessed Master led His wondering disciples, "as far as to Bethany." The Papists would have had it "as far as to Calvary." But, no! Away from the place of a skull and dead men's bones, away from the regions of condemnation and death. He leads them to resurrection and ascension ground. "He led them out as far as to Bethany: He lifted up His hands and blessed them." Blessed be God, I know what that means! "While He blessed them, He was parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Have you ever in spirit been in the same spot? Look! He is gone! Where? To prepare a place for thee and me, that where He is, we may be also.

"God is in the midst of her." Yes, in the midst of the virgin throng, high in the heights of glory, the glorious God-Man stands. Sinners saved, washed from every stain and cleared from every charge, surround Him. Rahab looks on with fond delight, while not a lie stains the fair comeliness which He had put upon her. David is there, but nothing is seen or known of the "former things" of treachery, adultery, and murder. Deity sheds forth eternal glory through the exalted Man upon all the ingathered ones, and glorious sovereignty is displayed in the slain Lamb.

"Those dear tokens of His passion,  
Still His dazzling body bears,  
Endless cause of exultation  
To His ransomed worshippers:  
With what rapture  
Gaze they on those glorious scars!"

He is the Lamb *in the midst of the throne*. Every eye and heart feasts with unwearying delight upon His glorious person. He lives and reigns in the exulting and rejoicing spirits who throng around Him, while the cry, the shout, the long, loud chorus ascends:—"Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!"

"Hark! how the glorious hosts above,  
Around the great JEHOVAH'S throne,  
Enjoying His eternal love,  
The Author of their glory own;  
Without a jarring note they sing,  
Salvation to our God and King."

Is it not blessed to know that *that* same Jesus, the Lamb, the God, the God-Man, is our Hope and Consolation? He is with us in all places whither we are led or driven. It signifies not where we go, through the deep dark waters of temptation and trouble, even there He will fulfil His own promise: "When

thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isaiah xliii. 2, 3). O what mercy! what kindness and care! He knew that we should deal very treacherously, should be transgressors from the womb, should wander from Him like silly sheep and wayward children: and yet gave His gracious promise which as graciously He performs. "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns," and, if thorns are not sufficient, I will "make a wall," and, if a wall will not do, "I will allure thee, deliver thee, carry thee, and keep thee." Who can tell the blessedness of being upheld by the arms of omnipotence, hid in the hollow of the hand of eternal love, embraced in the bosom of unfaltering affection, and a place given in the heart of the eternal Three-in-One better than that of sons or of daughters!

God is in the midst of Zion, and Zion lives in the affections of her God. He is a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her. Her sons and daughters shine resplendently in His glorious coronet.

"There David shines, without a stain;  
Uriah's blood shall ne'er be known;  
For, like a millstone in the main,  
Are all his black transgressions thrown."

Yes, blessed be God, He preserved David whithersoever he went.

"Rahab, the harlot, loved by Thee,  
Shall never sink to Tophet's flame;  
When Jesus hung upon the tree,  
The Book of Life contained her name."

What magnanimous mercy! Though in herself an abandoned, lying harlot, yet, in Him free from all sin, her case in His loving hands, her name inscribed upon His heart, and her person secure in the midst of His glorious perfections.

"Happy Zion!  
What a favoured lot is thine!"

"She shall not be moved." Let sin, Satan, death, and hell combine and rush like a wild deluge over the child of God; let the floods of temptation rage horribly, and the billows of trouble roar mightily, yet JEHOVAH sits a King above them all. He holds the waters in the hollow of His hand from whence they shall assuage; but from His heart Zion can never be moved, from His hand a weakling can never be plucked.

"God shall help her, and that right early." See margin:—"When the morning appeareth." Turning to Exodus xiv., we see how in the morning watch JEHOVAH looked destruction on the foes of His people and deliverance for His own. So it is

now ; after long seasons of darkness and desertion the star of hope sheds its inspiring ray across the heaving billows of this life, and gives the sweet assurance that by-and-bye the Sun of Righteousness will arise above the spiritual horizon, shedding peace and joy upon Zion's pathway, ay, and the comforting assurance too that an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto the tempest-tossed ones into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Blessed be God for present help in time of trouble !

" In darkest shades, if Thou appear,  
My dawning is begun :  
Thou art my soul's bright Morning Star,  
And Thou my rising Sun."

### HYMN.

I SING the gracious fix'd decree,  
Pass'd by the great Eternal Three,  
In council held in heav'n above :  
The Lord's predestinating love.

All that concerns the chosen race,  
In nature, providence, and grace,  
Where they shall dwell—and when remove,  
Fix'd by predestinating love.

Their calling, growth, and robes they wear,  
Their conflicts, trials, daily care,  
Are for them well arrang'd above,  
By God's predestinating love.

In this let Zion's sons rejoice,  
Their God will not revoke His choice ;  
Nor sin, nor death, nor hell, can move,  
His firm predestinating love.

This is our bulwark of defence,  
Nor foes, nor fiends shall drive us hence :  
In life, and death, and realms above,  
We'll sing predestinating love.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## LOST IN LOVE.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JUNE 1ST, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women !  
what is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us ?"—  
Song of Solomon v. 9.

THIS book, which is styled by the Holy Ghost, "The Song of Songs which is Solomon's," may well be styled the Holy of Holies, or the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of Divine inspiration. In it is revealed to the living members of the one body, who are under the guidance and governance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, that consecrated ground which can only be trodden and enjoyed by consecrated persons—those on whose foreheads is seen the Father's name, and in whose experience, walk, and conversation, the truth once inscribed upon the crown of the Jewish high priest is discerned, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." None but holy persons can enjoy God's holy ground. None but God's elect, redeemed, and regenerate people can spiritually enter into the hidden meaning of these words,—

"We are a garden walled around,  
Chosen, and made peculiar ground ;  
A little spot enclosed by grace  
Out of the world's wide wilderness."

It is the lot, I believe, of many who worship within these walls to be brought now and again, by the grace and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, to delight in those sweet spots of spiritual refreshment which He provides for them in the glorious Gospel of the blessed God ; for it is my desire that you may experience the precious privileges abounding in every chapter of this book. Turn to chap i. 3. Here the bride, with the experience of deadness and slothfulness, cries, "Draw me." The self-sufficient pietist knows nothing of the need expressed in this heaven-born desire. Living souls in union with a precious Christ know full

wall that they cannot go a single step alone. Sometimes they are blessed with the powerful support of the loving arms of the heavenly Bridegroom; while, at other times, they are left to experience their helplessness, to know that down in the dust is their portion, and that nought but the long, strong, powerful arm of love can raise them to His bosom in which He carries them safely home. The desire of the bride is, "Draw me," while she resolves to run after Him. "We will run after Thee." This is quite right, for wherever God, by the grace of His Son and the indwelling of His Spirit, draws a soul to Him, He makes that soul, sometimes in a mysterious manner, the instrument to draw others to Himself. But Divine drawing and spiritual running do not fully show forth the riches of God's love. See! "*The King hath brought me into His chambers.*" The bride does not say, "The King hath drawn me, or allowed me to run into His chambers; but He Himself hath brought me." This reminds me of that very instructive narrative in John xxi. 20—23. Peter, who had been commissioned by the Master to feed the lambs and sheep of His flock, and was brought into the sweet experience of His Master's love, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved, and said, "Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." He did not say to John, "Follow thou Me." Why not? Because John was wholly occupied with Him, and at that moment was not only resting at His feet, but spiritually reclining upon His bosom. Look at chap. ii. 4: "He brought me." This is not like John i. 41, 42, where Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus; but it is Jesus Himself bringing His bride to the banqueting house of covenant love. We rejoice in the sweet experience expressed in those blessed lines we sing sometimes:—

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,  
And my Beloved is mine!  
He brings a poor vile sinner  
Into His house of wine.  
I stand upon His merit,  
I know no other stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth  
In Emmanuel's land."

If there is one thing more than another which cheers and encourages my heart in declaring the Gospel of the grace of God, it is that *He brings* a poor vile sinner into this pulpit to sound out His praise, proclaim His excellences, make known the riches of His grace, and, at the same time, feed upon those provisions of Divine love which He spreads before us so bountifully in His own glorious Gospel.

But it is ours for a little while this morning to look at the precious portion which I have read by way of text. Before we dwell upon it we will notice the circumstances which called forth this questioning from the daughters of Jerusalem. Look

at the commencement of the chapter: "I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse; I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk; eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." As we notice the close of the preceding chapter, we see this is the answer to the bride's request, "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." Mark well the very words of the Bridegroom, "I AM." I love to dwell upon these two words. They are very short, but as long as eternity. The desire of the longing soul is, "Let my Beloved come." The response of the Beloved is, "I AM come." It is not, I will come, or, I have come; but, "I AM." Look at that glorious title which reveals Christ with His people from eternity to eternity. Though dwelling in the regions of unsullied and unapproachable light, yet ever one with His bride in all her darkness and dreariness. Before all worlds He embraced her in the arms of His everlasting love according to that glorious hymn of Kent's, which I think we do not sing as often as we might:—

"'Twas with an everlasting love  
That God His own elect embrac'd,  
Before He made the worlds above,  
Or earth on her huge columns plac'd."

"I AM come into My garden." My enclosed, consecrated, and reserved spot for fellowship, intercourse, and communion with My sister, My spouse. "My sister," identified with Me as one of the Father's children throughout the ages of eternity. "My spouse," one with Me in the bonds of everlasting affection. "I have gathered My myrrh." What is this? Myrrh is always associated with bitterness. This points out the precious fact that the Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, is not unmindful of the bitter experiences of His people, nor of the sorrows and tears produced in union with Himself. Of His own we give Him, for what have we that He can accept that flows from any source but Himself? Is there any myrrh to be gathered by the Master in Grove chapel to-day? Some of you may have come desiring to sing the high praises of your God; but are only able to sigh and cry because of your felt deadness, which is not death after all; for the dead feel and know not anything. Bless His holy name, He will not forget, neglect, nor despise His myrrh; but will mark well and treasure up the bitter tears you shed while you are blest with a view of His sufferings for you and for the whole election of grace. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalm li. 17). When the Beloved says, "My myrrh," He alludes to the sorrows, sufferings, and griefs of the bride in union with Him. It is our lot oftentimes to sing in spirit,

"For though our cup seems fill'd with gall,  
There's something secret sweetens all."



That "*something secret*" is the presence of the Master. A deserted pilgrim will say, "But I do not experience His presence, yet I pine and sigh for it." Well, cheer up! if His presence is not enjoyed, it will be more or less experienced. Those wishes so weak, those desires so feeble, and those longings so urgent, give blessed evidence that a precious Christ is not far off.

"*With My spice.*" What is this? Depend upon it, without the biting winds of temptation, and the bruising of tribulation, there will be very little experience of the flowing out of the spices. As our souls are brought to experience oneness with Christ in tribulation and temptation, the sweetness of His spices will be enjoyed. It is often upon the beds of suffering that we see the sweet effects of His compassion, love, and pity. His spices will flow when tribulation is our lot. Not only the myrrh of godly sorrow and the spice of everlasting love, but the honeycomb and the honey. See! "*I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey.*" These indicate the mellowing power of Divine grace experienced in the hearts of His people. "*I have drunk my wine.*" A matured experience from old and established pilgrims, who have drunk of the wine of astonishment from His hands, and the strong drink which ready-to-perish ones delight in. The little ones in grace are not forgotten; those who love to suck at the breasts of Divine consolation. "*With my milk.*" Wine for the old stager in the beaten path of tribulation to the saint's rest above, and milk for the little ones who hang upon the bosom of everlasting love, who are dandled upon the knees of Divine affection, and who delight to find all their salvation and security in the activities of their covenant Carrier. He feeds upon His own graces as they appear in the hearts of His people, and calls upon them to be sharers of His joy: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." This is marvellous grace. He not only comes into the assemblies of His saints to feed upon the fruits of His own producing, whether it be the sigh of godly sorrow or the song of spiritual delight; whether it be the patient endurance in the valley of humiliation or love and liberty in the heights of covenant favour; but He calls upon His own to feast with Him. He says, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Or, as we read in the margin, which appears not very elegant, "*and be drunken with loves.*" Inebriated, elated, carried out of one's self. With what? Not with wine, but with the Spirit. The margin says, "*With loves.*" "*Drunken with loves.*" I believe Wm. Mushett, who died with these words upon his lips—"Drunk with mercy"—knew something of this when he wrote these precious lines:—

"More of Thy love, my God, I find  
In every hour I live;  
More of Thy peace, in heart and mind,  
Doth each sharp trial give."

There you see the myrrh and the spice.

"Up to my Father's high decree  
Each act in time I trace ;  
Up to the glorious Sovereign Three—  
Almighty Fount of grace."

Mark ! Not only the love of the Father, but—

"The Man who lived, and died, and rose  
To perfume heaven with blood ;  
To Him my soul her pardon owes,  
And claims Him for her God."

Thence low He stoops to watch the lot  
Of souls to Him once given ;  
And makes the dying sinner's cot  
The glorious gate of heaven."

Not only the love of the Father and the Son, but the love of Holy Ghost also.

"And Thou, eternal Spirit vast,  
What love can Thine transcend ?  
Since Thou Thy lot with me hath cast,  
Indwelling God and Friend."

Do you experience this ? Then you know something of spiritual and heavenly salvation, in the enjoyment of which your spirit cries :—

"My willing soul would stay  
In such a frame as this,  
And sit and sing itself away  
To everlasting bliss."

This is true in my case. But the Beloved calls upon His loved ones to eat and drink. He says, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isaiah lv. 2). He continues, "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (John vi. 55, 56). Truly this is fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, by the grace and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit.

"*I sleep, but my heart waketh.*" Know ye anything of this ? A drowsy, lethargic state. You would, but cannot sing ; you would, but cannot pray ; you would, but cannot hear the Bridegroom's voice in the preaching of the Word ; you sleep, yet, thank God, you are not dead. Your sleep is restless, while your heart acknowledges that spiritual conflict which is unknown in the unregenerate : "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

"*It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled.*" He comes knocking with His exceeding great and precious promises and new covenant commands. It is surprising and matchless grace which causes us to know that after we have been blessed with the high favour of a covenant God, and the presence of Him whom our souls love,

we have wandered from Him in thought, purpose, and desire, and other objects have engrossed our time and attention, yet He comes, and comes again, and says, "Open to Me, My sister, My sleepy sister; My love, My sleepy love; My dove, My sleepy dove; My undefiled." Though drowsy, sleepy, and slothful, yet ever, in His eye and estimation, His undefiled. He who neither slumbers nor sleeps, deals so tenderly with His sleeping ones in the heights and in the depths. On the heights of Tabor, when He was transfigured before His favoured three, they were heavy with sleep (Luke ix. 32). In gloomy, dark Gethsemane, He bade them watch with Him one bitter hour. After seeking the presence of His Father which was denied Him, He returned to them, and found them fast asleep. Any reproof, rebuke, or upbraiding word from the lips of the suffering Bridegroom? No, blessed be His holy name, He has none for the loved ones of His heart. He simply said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest" (Mark xiv. 41). Those were words of loving sympathy to the souls of His weary disciples: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

*"For My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night."* This reminds me of that precious verse of Dr. Watts:—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air  
Witness'd the fervour of Thy prayer;  
The desert Thy temptation knew,  
Thy conflict and Thy victory too."

But in no place do we see the dark sorrows of Jesus revealed as in the conflict in Gethsemane, and all for us. There it was night with Him. A dark and dreary night of desertion to the dear Redeemer's soul. Night, for the dark cloud of judgment lowered upon Him; night, as the dense clouds of His people's sins hid His Father's complacent smile from His view; night, too, when the three hours' darkness which overspread the earth gave but a faint illustration of that dark season of inward desertion which wrung from His sinless soul the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" His head and His locks were then filled with the pelting drops of the wrath of a sin-hating God. It is only by His command—"Open to Me"—accompanied by the dew of loving sympathy, that can prevail with such a wretched heart as mine. It is our mercy to know that "the dews of His sorrows, which are lusted with His love," are the cause of sweet refreshment, comfort, and consolation to our souls as they are brought to experience fellowship with our Head in His sufferings and temptations. *"The drops of the night."* The drops of Divine wrath, indignation, and fury deserved by me. "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me." "Reproach hath broken My heart" (Psalm lxxix.). These drops of wrath were not against His people, but against their sins; not against the bride, but against her iniquities;

not against the Church, but against her transgressions; and all was poured out upon Him. By this His Church is blessed, refreshed, and comforted.

*"I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"* This is a pretty greeting which the Lord Jesus Christ receives at the hands of one He loves so much. Indolence and impotency are experienced, and fleshly excuses are not wanting. The feet of the Orientals, being not wholly covered as ours are, contract much of the sand and soil of the journey. Coat put off, sandals thrown aside, feet washed, and body resting, the soul longs for a continuance of fleshly repose. It shrinks from the tribulation which is in the world, and would enjoy the peace which is in Him alone. But this must not be. His peace must be experienced in the midst of that conflict from which we oftentimes shrink. Blessed be His name, *our weakness* calls forth *His strength*.

*"My Beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him."* The hand of our Jesus is all-powerful, and when it is put forth, nought can withstand it.

"Thrice blessed be the Hand that gave,  
Thrice blessed when it takes;  
Blessed be He who smites to save,  
Who heals the heart He breaks;  
Perfect and true are all His ways  
Whom heaven adores and death obeys."

David could cry, "Thy hand presseth me sore" (Psa. xxxviii. 2); and he could also say, "Thy right hand holdeth me up, and Thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psa. xviii. 35). A gracious hand like this, and moved by such a heart of love, cannot soon be diverted from its purpose. As the hand of power, the hand of wisdom, the hand of love, and the hand of blessing is brought to bear upon the child of God through the communication of the Gospel of grace, there is a sweet melting of heart experienced and an opening for the entrance of the Beloved.

*"I rose up to open to my Beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh."* This is the experience of godly sorrow over the sins which caused my Lord so much smart and distress. *"And my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock."* Mark you, sweetness is mingled with the sorrow and soul-distress, and so it must be with all who are brought to experience spiritual oneness with Christ in His sufferings.

"Love and grief my heart dividing,  
With my tears His feet I'd bathe,  
Constant still in faith abiding,  
Life deriving from His death.  
May I still enjoy this feeling,  
In all need to Jesus go;  
Prove His wounds each day more healing,  
And Himself more fully know."

"*I opened to my Beloved; but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone.*" Know ye ought of an experience like this? From ten thousand pulpits this morning a contrary experience is dealt out, even that lie of Satan, that it is in the power of the child of God to hold communion with Christ at any time. Read the whole of this verse in the light of that God-wrought experience revealed in the written Word. Christ withdrawn—the soul failing—the sinner seeking—the unanswered call. Look at Job's plaintive declarations: "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me. When His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness" (chap. xxix. 2, 3). Turn to his ninth chapter and eleventh verse: "Lo, He goeth by me, and I see Him not; He passeth on also, but I perceive Him not." Come with me to the twenty-third chapter and third verse: "O that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat." "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, but I cannot see Him." You find the very same experience in chap. xxx. 20: "I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not hear Me: I stand up, and Thou regardest me not." Jeremiah was led through the same paths of dreary desertion. See Lam. iii. 6—8: "He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old: He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He hath made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer." You remember Abraham's experience in communing with his God, described in Gen. xviii. 33: "And the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place." The Arminian perversion of this Scripture is, "*And the LORD went His way as soon as Abraham left communing with Him.*" But the Divine declaration in this case teaches us that the Lord begins and leaves off communing with His people when He pleases. You see the same truth in the case of Jacob in Gen. xxxv. 13: "And God went up from him in the place where He talked with him." He goes up from us to draw our affections from earth after Him.

"*My soul failed when He spake.*" What are we to understand by this? That which we find in Gen. xlii. 28, when Joseph's brethren found their money in their sacks' mouth, "their heart failed them" (margin, "*went forth*"). This indicates anxiety, dismay, perplexity, and sorrow at the remembrance of His counsels unheeded, and indifference to His promises. This is sure to be as we experience the withdrawing of the one Object of our heart's affections.

"*I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer.*" This I have oftentimes known and felt, and no doubt I shall again and again if God keeps me any

length of time in the wilderness. This is not a very pleasant, but it is a very profitable, experience. It is an enviable state when compared with those who are "*twice dead*"—dead in trespasses and sin, and dead in a cold, lifeless, and barren profession. It reminds me of that precious narrative in Matt. xv. 23, in which is described the treatment the poor woman received from the Master and His disciples who left her poor daughter at home grievously vexed with a devil. "He answered her not a word," and *they* would have sent her unheeded away. It also reminds me of the anxious sisters of the dying Lazarus sending word of his sickness to our blessed Lord. "When He had heard, therefore, that he was sick, *He abode two days still in the same place where He was.*" Ah, my dear friends, He has not only to teach us how to pray, but also to wait His time for an answer. The Book says, "Continue in prayer," and adds, "Watch in the same with thanksgiving." Has God taught thee and me to pray? He will sometimes appear to say Nay to thee. But this He really cannot do. He keeps us waiting for an answer to prove the genuineness of His own work within us, the reality of the faith of His operation, the worth of the prayers of His inspiring, and His own faithfulness in our heart's experience. "*He answered her not a word.*" I have been there many times, and it is a great mercy that I have, for, if He had answered my prayers with the asking, and given me all I asked of Him, I should now be the proudest wretch in all creation.

"*The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.*" Who are these watchmen? The watchmen and keepers on the walls of the old city of Legality can do nothing else but wound the followers of the Lamb. But those upon the walls of Zion, who are appointed by the great and glorious King to deal out His laws, are not preachers of smooth things. Their's is a stripping and searching testimony. It wounds as well as heals. It tears in pieces every shred and patch of fleshly experience which the child of God may be hugging to himself. It is the privilege of the teacher of God's pure truth to break down and build up. The Word proceeding from him by the power of the Holy Ghost will prove "quick and powerful, sharp and piercing, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." The Word is thus revealed as "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). You may rest assured that this piercing, dividing, and discerning is anything but pleasant to the tried and tempted children of God.

"*I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell Him, that I am sick of love.*" Or, "*that I am wounded with love.*" Who are these daughters of Jerusalem? Hypocrites and formalists? Some say they are those who know nothing of the teachings of the Holy Ghost, or of the blessings and benefits

which are treasured up for the Church in her Head and Representative, Christ Jesus. But I do not say so. In many parts of this book of Solomon's Song the members of the one body are set forth according to the instruction they have received, and the experience they enjoy. Some of God's children are leaning upon the bosom of Divine affection, while others are sighing at Mercy's door. Some are wholly absorbed with the beauties of Emmanuel's person, while others are exercised about the things which accompany salvation; but not salvation, not with Christ Himself. Many of God's children exercise themselves about minor and non-essential things which trouble me not for one moment. I see anxious ones putting forth their hands to steady God's ark, little thinking that all things are in the hands of Him who doeth all things well for His Church and people, and is well able to hold and keep His own. I do not know a portion of God's Word where the daughters of Jerusalem are described more plainly than 1 Cor. iii. 1—4: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strifes, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" These were God's children, yet they were carnal in their associations, desires, and conclusions. Christ was precious, but not all in all to them. Yet to such as these, the bride, in the intensity of her desire for communion with Christ, says, "If ye find my Beloved, tell Him that I am sick of love." Here I find a truth which lay dormant in my heart for many a long year, and which I find very hard work to express even now. I know many of God's children who readily say to others, "Remember me at the throne of grace. You will pray for me, won't you?" Well, I find it hard to say that to any child of God. This may be owing to the terrible spots through which He has brought me, to the bitter experiences with which He has favoured me, or to the sense I have of my utter dependence upon Him who "prays the prayers within me I cannot ask or think." I remember, upon one occasion, standing at the door of a vicarage in Derbyshire, when the vicar, a dear friend of mine—I may as well tell you his name—it was our friend William Lush—said to me, "You will pray for me." I could have turned upon him and said, "Pray for yourself." How was that? Because I was in no praying mood, and my heart within me was desolate. Yet it is a blessed privilege to be remembered at the throne of grace by those who have an audience with the King, to be laid upon the hearts of those who are indulged with communications with the court of heaven. Yes, it is a blessed thing to be remembered to the Hearer and Answerer of prayer by those who are near and dear to Him. It will be a long time before I forget

those two lines which were once breathed in weakness in my ears,—

“Tell Him, when you see His face,  
I long to see Him too.”

It is oftentimes the case that through the prayers of those in communion with Him He is pleased to manifest Himself to the waiting hearts of tried and tempted disciples. “Tell Him that I am sick of love.” Wounded at heart for the presence of a precious Christ. Longing for the joys of His presence, the smiles of His countenance, and for those love-looks which melt the heart to gratitude and praise. The daughters of Jerusalem turn upon the bride in the language of the portion I have read to you only by way of text, for I intend this morning’s discourse to be a kind of prelude to others upon the varied beauties and excellencies of Zion’s best Beloved set forth in the subsequent verses.

“*What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?*” There are those among the children of God who think that a favoured sinner can be taken up too much with the one Object of the Church’s affection. I have seen, mourned, and lamented over this, ay, and wept many tears over it. I have found preachers of God’s glorious truth, who, because others have been privileged to exalt a precious Christ very high, and to declare more of His suitability to His poor and needy people, have said, “He is only a letter preacher.” What do they mean? Whatever they mean, the fact is, that the despised preachers are so delighted with the remedy as not to occupy the whole of their time in describing the malady. They preach the beauties and perfections of Jesus more than the imperfections and infirmities of the creature. They love to be the honoured instruments in the hands of their God in leading forth the burdened and the bound in the dances of them that make merry in their hearts before Him. They love to lead Zion’s captives to the high ranges of covenant favour and into the glorious liberty of the children of God. As they deal out the covenant verities of the Gospel they are met with the taunt, “Only a letter preacher, he does not come down to my experience.” O my dear friends, don’t talk such rubbish, and attempt not to drag down the worship of the freed children of God to the level of your fleshly feelings. I love to be God’s instrument in leading the children away from their idols. We all have them. If not, where was the necessity for such a promise as this, “From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you” (Ezek. xxxvi. 25). Where is the necessity for an injunction like this: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols?” (1 John v. 21). Because every child of God is prone to wander after fleshly idols. We see this in the case of Jacob as recorded in Gen. xxxv. 1: “And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there: and make thee an altar unto God, that appeared



unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments." Such an incident as this is not only true in the history of Jacob, but in ours also. We all have our idols of one kind or other, and while we are occupied with them we shall never be truly happy in the company of one to whom Christ is first, Christ last, and Christ All in all.

"*Thy Beloved.*" This is an acknowledgment that though she was deserted and enjoyed no sweet manifestation of His love, yet Christ was her Beloved. I think I can see many in this place this morning who are doubting their interest in that love which God the Holy Ghost has oftentimes shed abroad in their hearts; but I have no question as to Christ being the Beloved of their hearts. The very longing of the heart for communion with Him is an evidence that He loves them with an everlasting love.

"Whom once He loves He never leaves,  
But loves unto the end."

Ah, poor doubting and deserted one, He loved thee in covenant before the worlds were framed, He loved thee throughout His life of suffering here below, He loves thee in the midst of all thy wanderings and waverings, and He will love thee to the end of all thy sins, sufferings, and sorrows. It is glorious to think, when divested of the burden of the flesh, He will own us as the jewels of His Father's election love, the objects of His unceasing affection, and we shall see Him as He is, and worship Him as we ought.

"*O thou fairest among women.*" Though she is sighing, crying, sorrowing, and weeping, the daughters acknowledge her beauty. Have you seen any of these fair ones in distress? I have, mourning because of the absence of Him they love. Just notice in the last place,

"*What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?*" In this precious enquiry I see, as I have hinted before, that JEHOVAH in the riches of His grace uses the weakest instruments in bringing His eternally-loved ones into living union with Himself. Notice that word "*so.*" This would indicate to the daughters of Jerusalem, the possession of something more than they possessed or understood. Those of us who long to see Him, and who fear they know Him not, may take encouragement from this precious fact, that their enquiries are sometimes the means in the hands of the Holy Ghost to lead those who are ignorant and out of the way into the sweet enjoyment of a covenant Father's love, a covenant Saviour's affection, and a covenant Comforter's grace and indwelling.

May the Bridegroom bless us for His own name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## THE PURITY AND PERFECTION OF CHRIST.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JUNE 8TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“My Beloved is white and ruddy.”—Solomon’s Song v. 10.

IT is not every child of God who is privileged, as an Israelite indeed, spiritually and intelligently to use that blessed and precious personal pronoun—“My”—in respect to Christ the Beloved. There are many for whom we have a good hope, ay, and something more, for we have precious faith of God’s own giving, and believe for them when they cannot believe for themselves; whose character and experience are truly described in that hymn of Hart’s which I have been compelled to quote several times of late:—

“Ye lambs of Christ’s fold, ye weaklings in faith,  
Who long to lay hold on life by His death;  
Who fain would believe Him, and in your best room  
Would gladly receive Him, but fear to presume.”

These know not how to do the good they feel they should do; they know not how to believe even when the demand for faith is made upon them; they know not how to pray when the declaration meets their eye: “Pray without ceasing;” they cut themselves off from all hope when called upon to hope in the Lord; they would say, My Father, my Beloved, my Comforter, but are not privileged to stand with confidence upon ground so sacred and so precious. And even here sometimes they are left to guides who lead them still further from the green pastures of covenant love, and from the still waters of eternal truth, to feast upon their own corruptions, grovel in their morbid feelings, and hug their chains of fear and unbelief which bind them down to spiritual bondage and slavery. In these dark regions they behold not the fair beauty of Divine truth, and delight not in those covenant comforts which abound in Christ Jesus to all the

true mourners in Zion. They understand not the fact that we change almost every moment of our lives, while JEHOVAH in His gifts and grace changes never. They cannot sing with spiritual intelligence those precious words by Hammond :—

"My soul through many changes goes,  
His love no variation knows."

They have no sweet apprehension of the truth revealed in dear old Kelly's words :—

"Zion's Friend in nothing alters,  
Though all others may and do ;  
His is love that never falters,  
Always to its object true :  
Happy Zion,  
Crowned with mercies ever new."

Mark ! It is not necessary for the child of God to be lifted up to the heights of covenant favour, and to be blessed with the light of His countenance, to be able to say, My God. It is not necessary for the child of God to be blessed with the full assurance of faith to look up and claim God as his own. He may be left to that which is so blessedly described in Col. ii. 2 : "The full assurance of understanding." Blessed be God, many of His children do understand their covenant relationship with JEHOVAH, when, as His saved ones, there is no bright shining on their way. Their case is blessedly described in Isaiah l. 10 : "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." That verse is a positive contradiction to fleshly and free-will conclusions. Here is one fearing the Lord and obeying the voice of God's Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what the apostle styles "the obedience of faith." It is not only faith in possession, but faith in exercise, by the power of the Holy Ghost. The voice of the Beloved is heard, yet the soul walks in darkness, and has no light. Some say that is chastisement because of sin, when God's rod is brought down upon the back of a naughty child. Is it so? No! It is Divine discipline in the case of one in righteousness, holiness, truth, and love, and all the graces of the Spirit are found. Though such an one walks in darkness and hath no light, he is counselled by his heavenly Preceptor to "trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." Now I can no more act according to that counsel than the puniest babe in all creation. I want something more than Divine counsel; I must have powerful application. I need Divine counsel to be powerfully applied to my heart by the grace and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit. With me the command must exist, not in the mere letter, but as a spiritual reality in my heart's experience. Then I hear His voice, and feel His long, strong, powerful arm of love. I trust in His name, and stay upon my God. Notice those words—

*"and stay upon his God."* It is not "stay upon God," or upon One who has promised to do everything for His people, but *"his God."* In these words we have personal relationship revealed. We see this in the experience of the great and glorious Head in Psalm xxii. 1. David, and David's Lord in anticipation cries, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" A Son forsaken! A child at a distance! No experience of the Father's helping, upholding, and comforting power, yet the acknowledgment flows forth from an exercised heart and assured understanding—"My God." Zion is represented in the same plight in Isaiah xlix. 14: "But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and *my Lord* hath forgotten me." The Church mourns not the absence of a God she longs to know, but one with whom she had held sweet converse and communion. Now turn to Psalm lxiii. 1: "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary." That word *"early"* refers to the spiritual sunrising. I have been taught to wait in the darkness for the rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. In this precious portion we see distance, desertion, drought, and dreariness, with the assurance of covenant relationship: "*O God, Thou art my God.*"

You may notice this again in the case of Mary Magdalene in that precious scene described in John xx. 11—15: "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre. And seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She said unto them, Because they have taken away *my Lord*, and I know not where they have laid Him." That little personal pronoun—"*my*"—will often perplex the tried and tempted child of God, whose evidences are not very bright, and in whom the witness of the Spirit is not clearly discerned. The witness of the Spirit to the sonship of the children does not always consist in the clear revelation of the Father's will concerning our union to the Son of His love and our covenant relationship with Him. It does not always consist in the delightful unfoldings of the glories, excellencies, and perfections of a precious Christ to my heart; but the working in me of those spiritual movements which indicate my oneness with Christ in His sufferings and death. Turn to 2 Cor. i. 5: "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." The sufferings of Christ were physical, mental, and spiritual, and so are those of His members. The very sufferings He experienced here upon earth from God, men, and devils, without measure, will be mine in measure, and each will be a witness of the Spirit with my spirit that I am a child of God.

But it is ours this morning, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the Holy Ghost, to seek for a little instruction and encouragement from the precious words I have read by way of text: "My Beloved is white and ruddy."

I.—THE PERSON—"My Beloved."

II.—HIS PURITY—"My Beloved is white."

III.—HIS PERFECTIONS—"My Beloved is ruddy."

I.—THE PERSON—"My Beloved." How many of us can sing with the Spirit and with the understanding also, so as to meet with the approving smile of the Bridegroom?—

"Hark! the voice of my Belovèd,  
 Skipping o'er the hills of guilt,  
 With Divine compassion movèd;  
 Lo, He comes whose blood was spilt;  
 'Tis my Bridegroom,  
 All my hopes on Him are built.  
 For me, He has undertaken,  
 To me, all His wealth He gives,  
 Yea, His love remains unshaken;  
 I shall live because He lives.  
 Heavenly Bridegroom,  
 How Thy name my soul revives."

"*My Beloved.*" Here we notice how He became the Beloved of any poor worm of the earth, of any wretched sinner, of any wandering or wavering child. How is it that I can look up into His gracious and lovely face, and with confidence say, "My Beloved?" We will just notice the exercises of the bride as set before us in the previous portions of this blessed Song. In chapter i. verse 2, she says, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." This indicates that there was not another object in all God's creation that could so draw forth her heart's affections. She mentions not His name, being wholly absorbed with His love and beauty. "Let Him kiss me." Let His exceeding great and precious promises be brought home to my heart by the power of His Spirit. "For Thy love is better than wine." You see how the language turns from the third person to the second. "Because of the savour of Thy good ointments, Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. Draw me." This is the expression of the longing soul for the sweet allurings of His love. "We will run after Thee." This is the gracious resolve; but here we have the glorious fact, "The King hath brought me into His chambers." Then we see the sure and certain effect of communion with an altogether lovely Christ. "I am black." Many of us know that this is spiritually true,

"The more Thy glories strike my eyes,  
 The humbler I shall lie."

The more the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ shines in my heart, the more I see and

know of the corruption and depravity of my old nature. The more I am brought into the blaze of His glory, the more I am on the look out for the accomplishment of that which causes my spirit to quiver with godly fear, "Thou shalt see greater abominations than these." But see! "Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." Now, I do not believe the bride is here ascribing her blackness to the sun looking upon her; but calling upon others not to look with envy and contempt upon her because of the spiritual privileges conferred upon her by her Bridegroom, by which she saw her blackness and confessed it. "My mother's children were angry with me: they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." "They made me." Who are they? The living people of God, but more especially the mere professors who force themselves into the Church for place, position, and power, and who exercise the minds of the people with any earthly, sensual, devilish matter, anything but the personal, piercing, and pungent operations of the Spirit of God. The infirmities and failures of God's children are canvassed, and oftentimes the true-born child of God is entrapped and drawn into keeping anybody's vineyard but his own. May it be ours to learn of the Master to look at home, study to be quiet, and do our own business. Now notice the earnest inquiry of the bride, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions." Listen to the response. "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids by the shepherds' tents." We come to chapter ii.; where we have the same experience set before us. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me." He, the great and glorious God, and the meek and lowly Man in one person. It is not, He sent for me, besought, invited, or commanded me; but He came to the very spot of my weakness and necessity, and brought me leaning upon His arm of love to His banqueting house, and His banner over me was LOVE. Listen! "The voice of my Beloved! behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My Beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." The witness of the Spirit is experienced in the land of Divine revelation, spiritual promise, and covenant relationship. Now look at verse 14, in what endearing language He speaks to her: "O My dove, thou art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me

see thy countenance," though it may be cast down with grief and flowing with tears of godly sorrow. "Let Me hear thy voice" of desire, hope, and expectation, which none can hear but Himself. Groanings which cannot be uttered. Sighs which cannot be heard. Expectations which flow alone from those who know the sweetness of a Saviour's love, and who have been blessed with sweet communications from Him. "For sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely." Look at the next chapter. The bride is here described as resting yet seeking. "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not." She rises and seeks Him in the streets and broad ways of the city, but finds Him not. She inquires of the watchmen, who are useless to her, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth." Chapter iv. describes the rare and varied beauties of the Church as she appears in the eyes of her Beloved. In chapter v. we have a description of the communication of grace to the bride. Having feasted upon His love, she is sick therewith, and opens her mind to the daughters of Jerusalem, who, not seeing and enjoying the same beauties with her, cry out, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" The bride then gives a general description of her Beloved in the words of the text. "My Beloved is white and ruddy." Then she particularises the varied and rare excellencies of the Bridegroom of her heart. But there are reasons why the Church of God and every living child in the family of JEHOVAH calls Him, "*My Beloved*." We will look at a few of these reasons. In the first place we see Him as

*The Father's Beloved.* Had He not been the Father's Beloved from the ages of eternity there never could have been any beauty or comeliness seen in Him to cause the Father to desire either Him or us. The language of the Father's lips, and that to all eternity, might have been the same which expressed the judgment of the ancient Jewish Church concerning Him: "He hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. liii. 2). But as our minds are led by the blessed Spirit, and the faith of His own giving takes a clean sweep through time past, and enters the council chamber of Deity, we revel with delight in the mutual love of the Divine Three. Here we may be charged with presumption; but I feel no condemnation in respect to the charge. If God, in the riches of His grace and the fulness of His mercy, leads our minds to the heights of His covenant, and to the apprehension of His mind and will in Christ Jesus before all worlds, is that presumption? None whatever on the part of that child who leans upon the arm of Omnipotence, rests upon the bosom of Everlasting Love, and to whom in all matters concerning salvation a precious Christ is All in all. Now turn

to Prov. viii. 22—31. Here Christ in covenant speaks. Some have argued as to the identity of the person speaking here. One says it is Christ as the Head of the Church. Another declares it to be the covenant because the word "wisdom" is in the feminine gender. My dear friends, here we behold Christ in covenant, and the covenant in Christ. Blessed be God, we can find no separation between Christ and the covenant. Here He speaks, "The LORD possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." The Father's Christ was His best Beloved, and will be the one Object of His heart's affections throughout the continued round of eternity. In eternity past we behold Him as JEHOVAH'S model Man, for, according to the model, mould, or pattern designed before all worlds, the sinless humanity of Christ was formed in the womb of the virgin, and Adam was at first created. But the glory of the covenant, and the rejoicing of the heart of the child of God, lies in the precious fact that Christ, as the Head of the Church, the Husband of His bride, the Saviour of the body, and the Glorifier of all in union with Him, is the Object of the Father's unceasing and ineffable delight. At such a glorious sight Satan looks on with hellish malignity, and would drag down the God-Man from the glorious heights of the covenant to which He had been raised by God the Father. But Satan's designs must be frustrated, and down from the heights of his pride he must be cast to the depths of everlasting disappointment and confusion. Pride brought him down from his lofty seat, while in true humility the Lord Jesus Christ maintains His seat of mediatorial sovereignty. Upon Him the Father looks with fond affection and undisturbed delight, and can at all times say to Him, "*My Beloved.*"

"*My Beloved.*" He is the delight and the Beloved of the Holy Ghost. In the declaration of Divine truth, and the proclaiming of God's glorious Gospel, Scripturally and spiritually, there is great lack upon this point. I believe that the personality, power, prerogatives, and sovereignty of the Holy Ghost are woefully ignored in these our days. I love to look at Him on a grand equality with the Father and the Son. The Divine Three of one mind, will, desire, and determination. The desire of the Father concerning His people is accomplished for them by the Son, and wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. There is nothing discordant here, and this you will see in the several portions of the written Word where the Trinity is set forth. Look at these three portions. Matt. xxviii. 19: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." 2 Cor. xiii. 14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy



Ghost be with you all. Amen." Col. ii. 2: "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." In Matt. xxviii. 19, the Father appears first; in 2 Cor. xiv. 13, the Lord Jesus Christ appears first; in Col. ii. 2, the Holy Ghost appears first. How is this? Because One is not afore or after another. Does the Father love? So does the Son, and so does the Holy Ghost. Is there a brighter manifestation of the love of One than of another. I answer unhesitatingly, No. But if left to my own judgment, I should say the love of the blessed Spirit transcends that of the Father and the Son. Did the Father love me before all worlds, appoint me to salvation by Jesus Christ, give me a place in the mystical body of His dear Son, and write my name in the Lamb's Book of Life? Did the Son in the fulness of time come into this world and identify Himself with an innumerable company of the vilest sinners this world ever saw? This love *seems* to surpass that of the Father, for we are not told that He identified Himself (only in the person of Jesus and by the indwelling of His Spirit) with His people. But here we see the Holy Ghost not bearing the sins of the people of God, not transferring their sins to the person of their Surety, but making their earthly, sensual, and devilish tabernacles His dwelling-place. Oh, this is astounding, magnanimous, matchless love! Well may we sing those blessed words of Mushett's,

"And Thou, eternal Spirit vast,  
What love can Thine transcend?  
Since Thou Thy lot with me hath cast,  
Indwelling God and Friend."

In contemplating this glorious and stupendous subject it is my delight to see the Holy Ghost manifesting His love to God's Christ in revealing Him in all His blessedness, bounty, and beauty to the waiting hearts of the Father's children. I love to be led in these things as far as God's Word will take me, and rejoice in that precious declaration by Paul, in Gal. i. 15, 16: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, *to reveal His Son in me.*" There we see the delightful work of the Holy Ghost. It is to reveal the person and preciousness of Christ in the hearts of the eternally-loved people of God, and bless them with the assurance that neither Father, Son, nor Himself will ever have them until all is performed that He, the covenant Remembrancer and gracious Communicator, has spoken of to them. The Holy Ghost so loves God's Christ as to delight in glorifying Him at all times.

"*My Beloved.*" Christ is not only loved by the Father and the Holy Ghost, but by the whole elect, redeemed, and living children of God. Are we amongst them? Can we look up

with childlike confidence and say in truth we do love Him? Well, with a good understanding in the fear of the Lord I can say I do. And yet I am sometimes found with the weaklings, singing,

" 'Tis a point I long to know  
(Oft it causes anxious thought),  
Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I His or am I not?"

Oftentimes when the child of God has been put to the test by evil men or tempting devils, he has manifested no mistake concerning his love to the Father's Beloved, and the Holy Ghost's delight. Let the superlative beauties of Christ be called into question in the hearing of any living, yet doubting disciple, and you will see him up in arms for the honour of his Master. Let anything be said derogatory to the character, salvation, or sovereignty of King Emmanuel, and you will find the spiritual metal of the doubting one truer than steel. Let aught be said disparaging His atoning blood, His all-prevalent intercession, His right to rule over all things in heaven, and earth, and hell, and you will soon discover the love of His weak disciple for his ever-loving Lord. Why does any child of God love a precious Christ? Why does any doubting and fearing one love Him and yet hesitate to express that love? It is all "*because He first loved us*" (John iv. 19). When did He first love us? In covenant before the worlds were framed, when He took us to His loved embrace, when He laid us upon His ever-loving bosom, when He found us a place in His affectionate heart, from which not all the designs of Satan, nor all the evils of the Adam fall, nor all the frightful effects of sin, could ever rend us. He loved us, and His love was such that He gave Himself for us. Look at a few of the precious testimonies of the New Testament concerning this glorious truth. The Son was given not only by the Father, for He gave Himself (Gal. i. 4). Here the mouths of all blasphemers and presumers who say they see no justice in the Father giving His Son to suffer so much are stopped. The Son was One with the Father in this gift and expression of covenant love. He gave Himself willingly, without hesitancy or demur. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). Listen to Paul's sweet declaration of this most precious truth. In Gal. ii. 20, he says: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live: yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, *who loved me, and gave Himself for me.*" In love He came down to the depths of all my necessity. In love He bore all the burden of my sins. In love He endured all the guilt, shame, and condemnation due to me and to all His people. In love He visited the haunts of impurity and defilement to seek and to save the loved ones of His heart, yet He contracted none

of their faith or pollution. He gave Himself to be the butt of Satan and of all hell, and to experience His Father's anger for thee and for me, poor sinner. Is this the experience of our heart by the teaching of the Holy Ghost? Has He convinced us of our sins and then led us blessedly and sweetly to see the sins which give us so much smart, and thousands more which we shall never know or feel, laid upon the sinless Sufferer and carried by Him into the land of never-ending forgetfulness, cast into the depths of the sea of eternal oblivion, and thrown behind JEHOVAH'S back. As He is thus revealed to us, how can we say ought else to Him but, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love thee?" (John xxi. 17). How can we do aught else in keeping therewith, but mourn over the poverty of the love we show to Him for His great love to us. But this is not all. Christ is not only revealed as the Sin-bearer of His people; but also as their Associate and Companion in the midst of all their wanderings and waverings, failures and falls. In this we see and know the persistency of Divine love. The reality of the love of Christ is proved in the very fact that the more we wander from Him, the more He pursues us with sweet revelations of His care and concern. His thoughts towards us are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give us an expected end of all our sins, sorrows, anxieties, and cares. His looks are looks of love and fond affection, which chase away the grief and sadness from the face of His eternally-loved one. His words are words of compassion and pity to all those who experience the bitterness of wandering from Him, even in thought, imagination, or desire.

II.—HIS PURITY—"My Beloved is white." Some have attempted to show forth the two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ from the words, "*white and ruddy*." White, denoting the purity and perfections of His Deity. Ruddy, setting forth the sorrows and sufferings of His humanity. It is ours to notice in these words the purity and perfections of the God-Man Mediator of His Church and people. God and Man in one Christ, "of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." Humanity taken into indissoluble union with Deity. Here we see God's Glory-Man, His righteous Servant, the faithful Steward of His bounties, the Dispenser of all His blessings. In Him alone of all the children of men we see purity and perfection. In whatever light He is revealed to us, purity, innocence, and righteousness shine. He is white. No defilement, flaw, or infirmity can be found in Him. Look at His person. He was a Lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter i. 19). Paul, by the Holy Ghost, declares Him to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). Look at His thoughts! "He knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21). Look at His words! "Neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter ii. 22). Look at His actions! "He did no sin" (1 Peter ii. 22). In His thoughts,

actions, and words no imperfection or impurity could be found. All was perfectly pure and fair. If we look at Him during the whole of His lifetime upon earth, we shall find nothing to mar the fair beauty of His person or character. Feeding the hungry, healing the sick, comforting His mourners, or rebuking His adversaries, purity and perfection appear in all. Does He feed the multitudes? True liberality characterises Him. He causes bread and fish to multiply in the eater's hands. Were the multitudes filled? He manifests a gracious economy: "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost." He is liberal without extravagance. He is economical without niggardliness. Do the sick, the maimed, and halt come unto Him? He receives them graciously, and imparts to them health, strength, and vigour. He has words of comfort and consolation for the mourners in Zion, while hypocrites writhe under His righteous rebukes. Is He threatened in Pilate's judgment hall, and scourged by the brutal soldiers? "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter ii. 23). Glorious truth! From Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross we see nothing but whiteness and purity, righteousness and perfection. Yes, in Him we behold "*a righteousness which an angel's tear would soil.*" His obedience from first to last is the pure white linen of the saints in which they stand arrayed, accepted, and justified in the sight of the Father. Daniel knew Him as "the Ancient of days, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool" (Dan. vii. 9). Upon Mount Tabor His three favoured disciples saw Him transfigured before them, when "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light" (Matt. xvii. 2). The confession of the whole Church when taught by the Holy Ghost is, "*My Beloved is white.*"

III.—HIS PERFECTIONS—"My Beloved is ruddy." This speaks of the perfect sufferings of the sinless Lamb of God. Well might the cry go forth from the lips of Jeremiah—but by the Spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger" (Lam. i. 12). When was this? From the very moment He was made under the law, to that moment when He could cry to the delight of all heaven, to the consternation of all hell, and for the joy of all God's elect, "It is finished!" When eight days old, He was taken into the temple, and the circumcising knife lacerated His sacred flesh. To Egypt, the hotbed of persecution to His ancient people Israel, He was driven by the bloodthirsty Herod. Look at Him in gloomy, dark Gethsemane! "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke xxii.

44). Trace Him to the judgment hall. "*He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting*" (Isa. l. 6). But more than all, follow Him in spirit to the terrible isolations and desolations of Calvary. There He was made sin, and treated as sin. The accumulated load of His people's transgressions were crowding upon Him, and at that dread period of time when all nature quivered, He was made "*The curse of God*" (Deut. xxi. 23, margin). The sword of JEHOVAH, the Father's justice, was red with the heart's blood of the Man of sorrows, His Fellow. The Shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered; but He must turn His hand upon His little ones (Zech. xiii. 7). Look at Him. His sacred hands and feet are extended and nailed to the accursed tree. His side is pierced, and out flows blood and water. His blessed head streams with precious blood from the wounds caused by the cursed thorns. I remember, when I was a lad, repeating a part of Dr. Watts's catechism, thus,

*Question.*—Who crucified Christ?

*Answer.*—The bloody Jews.

Ah, my dear friends, now I can join with Hart, and sing in the minor mode,

"The soldier pierc'd His side, 'tis true,  
But I have pierc'd Him through and through."

Yes, and I can sing with a little sorrowful sweetness,

"The hand my cruel sins have pierc'd  
Is now my guard and guide."

I am not so much troubled about the cruelties of the Jews as the cruelty of my own sins and transgressions. My heart is melted and softened with sweet compunction as I am taught by the blessed Spirit that my sins were the nails which pierced the hands and feet of my Beloved. This causes me to hate the very sins I do, renounce the very lusts my flesh clings to, hate the iniquities my carnal nature hugs, and lays me low as a suppliant at the footstool of sovereign mercy. Let others cry, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" My joyful and chastened spirit cries, "My Beloved is white and ruddy." He is pure in His person, pure in His righteousness, pure in His love. He is perfect through sufferings, and in Him I behold my perfect redemption, justification, cleansing, peace, acceptance, sanctification, and victory by His precious bloodshedding. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. xiii. 8), and is now the slain Lamb in the midst of the throne (Rev. v. 6). He will yet come in garments dyed with blood to slay His enemies and welcome home His friends. When I come to lay my head upon my pillow for the last time, may my spirit be filled with His redeeming love, and my faltering breath cry out, "Victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb."

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## THE CHIEF BELOVED.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JUNE 15TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"The Chiefest among ten thousand."—Song of Solomon v. 10.

THE one Object of the Church's adoration and praise is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head and Representative of grace, the Expounder of His Father's Word to His children, and the Revealer of the Father's will to His redeemed and regenerate brethren. He ever appears as the delight of the Father's heart. It is He whom the Spirit loves to glorify in the experience of the saints, and whose beauties He delights to unfold. Wherever you go in this wilderness world and meet with those whom He has graciously brought to a knowledge of Himself, and in whose hearts He is All in all, you are at home in a moment. Contention, strife, disorder, and dissension cease where He is First and Last. I was greatly struck some time ago with the saying of an old man, with which, at the time, I did not agree, yet of the truthfulness of which I have been brought to see and know something. Here you have it: "Where disorders exist among the people of God, their origin may generally be traced up to the pulpit." Deep searchings of heart, wrought by God the ever-blessed Spirit in the presence of the Father, have caused me to hesitate many times before expressing the truth concerning men and things. The desire of my heart is to speak the truth concerning Himself, not as an isolated being, not at a distance from His people, but in eternal, immutable, indissoluble union with them. Himself, in communion and intercourse with His bride the Church. Himself, as the great and gracious Head, imparting wisdom, strength, comfort, and consolation to the various members of His one body; for every member shall come into experimental possession of all the wisdom, now come into strength treasured up for it in its Head. Yes, all that was

handed over for it to the safe keeping of the Surety, is held sacred by Him until the time of want, necessity, privation, or perplexity experienced by insignificant, or what may be considered uncomely, members. You must know that the Lord Jesus Christ has, and that according to Divine inspiration which cannot err, members uncomely in the Church's estimation; but it is the privilege of those who are favoured with bountiful communications from on high, and blessed communion with the Bridegroom, to bestow more abundant honour on the uncomely and the infirm in the fold of Christ.

As the Lord Jesus Christ is the one Object of heaven's adoration and praise, and of the Church's glory and delight, so He is in Himself the All in all of every soul brought into association, identification, and communion with Him. Upon and at such the world looks and wonders, while professors, and even possessors, will speak in envious and unbecoming terms, which do not become the children of God, against those who manifest the sweets of communion with a covenant God in Christ. It was once said with a sneer of dear Dr. Hawker, that he could find Christ in a cabbage stalk. Well, I would rather be with the doctor and his cabbage stalk than I would with the professor who would not seek to find God's Christ in everything. The anxious desire of my heart is that I may enjoy His company wherever I go, and that in public or private I may have His words of love, life, light, and liberty for His own. I love to speak and act in His Spirit, not my own, for there I am conscious of weakness and failure as much as any one, and know that His words, not mine—His counsel, not mine—His admonitions, not mine—will profit the tried and tempted of His flock. I would rather be found with the broken-hearted children of the family enjoying a little communion in the things of God and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings, than a censor castigating the erring with a whip of small cords made up of preceptive portions of the written Word. But it is mine, and I thank God for it, to know what this means, "And being let go, they went to their own company" (Acts iv. 23). During the past week, being let go from this huge London, the Lord graciously took me to Hull to find some of my own company. At the railway station I was met by my dear friend and brother, Thomas Davis, Vicar of St. Andrew's, Southcoates. With him I had a little communion in the things of God. In the evening I went to preach in St. Andrew's schoolroom. Previous to this he said, "What kind of a service do you prefer?" I replied, "Just the kind of service you always have here." He went through a portion of the evening service, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Then I stood up to preach from Heb. ix. 14 to a congregation of people who manifested a hungering and thirsty spirit after the living God, and you may rest assured God was there, and they were abundantly refreshed. Before we went to

the service the vicar put a letter in my hand which was addressed to me at the vicarage. It was from a poor woman informing me that in days gone by it was her lot to be brought to Grove chapel, where she heard the truth of God, which found its way with sovereign and solemn power to her heart, from the exercised heart of dear old Joseph Irons. She was taken away from this huge Babylon, and after many vicissitudes in providence, married a poor fisherman and settled down in a place called New Clee, near Grimsby, in Lincolnshire, where not a vestige of living truth can be heard from Churchman or Dissenter. She gathers around her a lot of young men to read God's Word and to teach them God's truth as God taught her within these walls. She was delighted to find from an advertisement in the local newspaper that the pastor of Grove chapel was to preach in Hull, and longed to be present, but could not, yet sent me her blessing. I sat down at once and wrote to her saying that on Friday I would be with her, and if she would gather together two or three, I would ask the Lord to give me a word for them. On Friday I sailed down the Humber to Grimsby and walked to New Clee, where I found my friend and sister in the Lord. She is a trophy of Divine grace. Her heart was melted with Divine love. Her head was cleared with Divine light. Her spirit was chastened with Divine fear. Her soul was rejoicing in blessed Gospel liberty. Her quiet demeanour was a rebuke to the pastor of the Grove, while he learned afresh that God in the riches of His grace can teach His people to profit without a preacher when He thinks fit and proper. In the evening I preached to about thirty people in an old schoolroom from Job xxxiii. 23, 24. Who can tell what the result of this visit can be? Here I am this morning a living witness to the truth and power of God's rich, free, sovereign, and uninfluenced grace as revealed by the power of the Holy Ghost, through the great and glorious Head, a precious Christ.

It is our privilege for a little while to contemplate the rare excellences of our most glorious Christ revealed in this precious portion of God's Holy Word :—

“The Chiefest among ten thousand.”

He alone can command and engage the bride's admiration and adoration. As He is revealed to her, she exclaims with wonder, and proclaims with delight, the beauties abounding in Him. She beholds the glories of Godhead shining in peerless splendour in Him, and expresses herself in the language of the Psalm which I read for our instruction and comfort this morning (lxxxix. 6—8): “Who in the heavens can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about Him. O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto Thee? or to Thy faithfulness round about Thee?”



Whatever attribute of JEHOVAH may shine forth gloriously from the bright page of inspiration before the spiritual vision of a Heaven-taught child of grace, Christ is there, Christ is beheld in the perfection of His Godhead. Is the strength of JEHOVAH brought before the mind? It is the strength of JEHOVAH-JESUS which He imparts to His own, causing them to know and feel that He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. iii. 20). Blessed with the power of Christ, the soul lies in true humility before Him, and rejoices in the fact that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth (Matt. xxviii. 18). In faithfulness also the bride sees and knows her Bridegroom to be First and Foremost of all. Look at those words: "Who is a strong LORD like unto Thee? or to *Thy faithfulness round about Thee?*" The faithfulness of God is revealed in every step, nay, seen in every act and look, and experienced in every Divinely-communicated thought of His, according to His precious word, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end" of all your doubts, fears, anxieties, and cares (Jer. xxix. 11).

In His holiness He is "the chiefest among ten thousand." Look at Him as He is revealed in the Song of Moses, as recorded in Exodus xv. 11: "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" The holiness of person, character, and acts of Christ, speaks of the spirit of intense separation and self-abnegation which ever characterised Him here upon earth. For mark, though He was the Mighty God, yet He humbled Himself to be a little child, ay, "a worm and no man." Had He a will? He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. Had He power? He came not to display it, but the power of the Highest who appointed Him. Had He wisdom? He sought not with fleshly pride to parade it, but to show forth the wisdom of the Father in the education, accomplishment, and refinement of every soul brought to His sacred feet to learn His Father's will and to taste the riches of His grace. Whenever we look at the Lord Jesus Christ, we see Him righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works. Look at His person. It is sinless. No taint, defilement, corruption, or pollution can be found in Him. All the sins of His people were laid upon His sinless body, yet He experienced no infusion of their impurity. As I have said many times, He was like a pure, bright sunbeam shining through a murky hovel, imparting light, and discovering the dirt and darkness, but contracting none. To His people, the Lord Jesus Christ communicates His purity, and is not affected in the perfection of His nature by their impurity. He communicates His life, light, and love; but is not impoverished by their deadness, darkness, or depravity. In His acts of salvation,

He appears in incomparable beauty and grace. See Micah vii. 17, 18: "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again; He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities." Mark well that last sentence: "*He will subdue our iniquities.*" Ah! my dear friends, the more we are brought into the realisation of the subduing power of JEHOVAH-JESUS' grace, the more we shall experience the opposing power of the flesh and the devil. The subduing power of grace once experienced is the pledge of future displays of the same. The more we feel it, the more we shall need it. "And Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

But look away from His glorious Godhead to His spotless Manhood. Turn with me to Psalm xlv., which is a precious epitome of Solomon's Song, and at verse 2 we read: "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever." Again at verse 7: "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness, therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Here we see Him peering above all others in beauty, bounty, and blessing. He is "*the Chiefest among ten thousand.*" Who are these ten thousand? This is a definite number given to set forth an indefinite. These are those whom the Father loves with an everlasting love, has chosen to eternal life and glory, and redeemed to Himself with the precious blood of His Son. These are the very persons whom the blessed Spirit loves, regenerates, and qualifies for glory, and are brought to experience the blessedness of that declaration by John: "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." Yes, it is blessedly true, in the experience of the thousands of His elect, redeemed, and regenerate brethren, He is "*the Chiefest among ten thousand.*"

"In every office He sustains;  
In every victory He gains;  
In every counsel of His will,  
He's precious to His people still."

He is more precious than rubies, or than the nearest and dearest we love upon earth. I have loved with natural affection, but when *that* was ruled by the love of God shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost given unto me, it became inexpressible. But all human charms and beauties must sink into insignificance before the appearance of a precious Christ, as revealed in the Word as our own by the grace, power, and indwelling of His blessed Spirit. He is fairer than the children of men. In His person there is no spot. In His righteousness there is no imperfection. In His character there is no flaw. In His demeanour there is no defect. Once there was no beauty in

Him that we should desire Him, but now we see nothing in Him to cause us to despise Him. Matchless beauties abound in Him. He *did no sin*, in which we see the beauty of His righteousness; He *knew no sin*, in which we behold the beauty of His mind; *In Him was no sin*, and in this we discover the beauty of His person; "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" He is holy; they are unholy. He is pure; they are impure. He is perfect; they are imperfection itself. As they appear in oneness with Him, their sins, impurities, and imperfections disappear, and they stand before the Father not as sinners, but as saints, in the glorious perfections of Him, the Object of the Father's unceasing delight, and heaven's worship and praise.

He is "the Chiefest among ten thousand" as God and Man in one Christ. In the Christ of God we see the Divine and human natures indissolubly united according to the language of Augustine, quoted in one of the Articles of the Established Church, "*never to be divided.*" High in the heights of glory He now stands, the ineffable delight of His Father's heart, and in Him is seen the whole election of grace, all His blood-redeemed ones, all the fruit of the Redeemer's soul travail. In Him I am privileged to see the Mediator of the covenant, His people's Reconciler, who settles every question of sin between them and their God. Think of that! Not only sins past, but those we shall commit to-day, to-morrow, and during the whole of our lives here on earth. He settled every question between us and our God, and only on this ground can we find access to Him and acceptance with Him. Now He stands before the throne, arrayed in garments of glory and beauty, which hide not the perfections of His person.

"Those dear tokens of His passion  
Still His dazzling body bears :  
Cause of endless exultation  
To His ransomed worshippers ;  
With what rapture—  
Gaze they on those glorious scars."

A Lamb as it had been slain stands in the midst of the throne. A lamb denotes meekness, innocence, lowliness. The throne denotes dignity, majesty, and sovereignty. He has seven horns and seven eyes, which set forth His perfect power and wisdom, and the efficacy of His Spirit's work in the hearts of His redeemed. In this Satan cannot detect a failure or a flaw. If the blessed Spirit communicates God's life and love to us, whatever we may experience of our old Adam nature, we stand in the person of Jesus meek, lowly, and undefiled before the all-searching gaze of the Father. Yes, and in the person of our great KING-PRIEST we are kings and priests to God the Father (Rev. i. 6). We sit with Him in His throne and we sway with Him His sceptre. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge

the world?" (1 Cor. vi. 2). The dignity of the saints in union with the Lamb is beyond all human conception. We are such poor short-sighted things in ourselves, and so apt to jump at wrong conclusions, that it would not do for us to know the ten thousandth part of the dignities and excellences treasured up for us in the once slaughtered Lamb. But look at His ten thousand redeemed ones with Him in their midst. Whatever be the privileges they enjoy, the graces they manifest, the experience they possess, the heights of favour they are lifted to, or the depths of Satan they may discover, possessing the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, there will be no fleshly emulation, no striving to lord over God's heritage, no trying to outrun others in the ways of the Lord, but a desire to be anything or nothing for the peace and prosperity of God's Zion. I love to obtain as much light as I possibly can to discover the hidden treasures of grace and glory lying beneath the letter of this blessed Book. I love to soar aloft on the wings of faith and love to the heights of covenant favour, and I desire to murmur not when taken through the furnace and the flood for the good of some of God's own tried and tempted ones. The prayer of my heart to His sacred Majesty is, that I may be kept from making a display of my favours which may be to the wounding and discomfort of many of the Lord's little ones. Am I taken into depths and through darkness? It is that I may know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Am I favoured with the presence and smile of my God? It is that I may partake of the glory of Christ. All that I possess spiritually and experimentally is from Christ, with Christ, in Christ, and to Christ. Throughout the whole of God's blessed Word you will find this to be true, which takes all conceit out of the true heaven-born and truly-taught child of God. Have I faith? I cannot boast and brag about it. If it be strong to stand the test of the most terrible temptations and to bear me up in the fight with the world, the flesh, and the devil, I can only boast in my precious Saviour whose faith it is. Have I life? "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). Thus I rejoice in the possession of the faith of my great and glorious Head. Have I hope? and does my hope appear brighter than that of another tried, timid, and trembling child of God? It is not mine to lecture such because I know that it is no more I that hope, but Christ that is in me the Hope of glory. Do I love? Yes, I do. I love the doctrines of grace and the means of grace which God has in His own hands and reserves to Himself the right to communicate His grace to whom He will. I love to assemble among the people of God, and I can say with the woman of Shunem, "I dwell among mine own people" (2 Kings iv. 13). Spiritually I cannot dwell with any other.

"My soul shall pray for Zion still,  
While life or breath remains,  
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,  
There God my Saviour reigns."

As the Holy Ghost teaches me my spiritual inability to perform any good thing, I know it is not in my power to dwell among mine own people or to preach with acceptance to their hearts. All this cometh from the King who is wonderful in counsel and mighty in working. It is He who preaches through me with His voice of glorious majesty and the still small voice of love to the tempted and tried in Zion. Is it mine to pray? Yes, and that sometimes with a heart melted by the power of Divine love and the sense of my own wretchedness and hell-deservedness melted into nothingness at His sacred feet.

"Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,  
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;  
Dissolved by His goodness I fall to the ground,  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I found."

But it is not I that weep and pray, but the Spirit of Christ in me. Am I privileged to sing one of the songs of Zion? I know what that means, "In the midst of the Church"—the ten thousand singers of Israel in union with Him—"will I sing praise unto Thee" (Heb. ii. 12). In whatever light we are privileged to look at our Lord Jesus Christ, in whatever phase or feature of Divine revelation we are favoured to behold Him, or whatever be the grace, experience, or blessing we enjoy, He is the All in all thereof. He is the Chiefest among ten thousand. He is the Altogether Lovely. If you will look in the margin of your Bibles, you will read,

"*A Standard Bearer.*" Christ is the Bearer of the standard of the covenant. He goes forth with the right royal standard of His own eternal, unchanging sovereignty. Love is seen in every line. He came not to witness concerning Himself or to display His own glory, but to witness of His Father's everlasting love and concern over His people, while it is the delight of the Holy Ghost to witness not of Himself, but of the bounty of the Father and the beauty of the Son. Each Person in the ever-blessed Trinity delights to witness concerning the fame and glory of His Fellows. As JEHOVAH-JESUS goes forth at the head of the elect and redeemed armies He displays on His banner that glorious inscription,

### LOVE.

Love is not peculiar to Himself: but the nature of the Divine Three. "His banner over me was love" (Song ii. 4). Love brought Him from the skies and triumphed over sin, Satan, death, and hell. Love displayed is the defeat of all the foes of His people, natural, spiritual, and infernal. Love revealed in the hearts of His redeemed slays their enmity, and brings them

in willing bonds to His sacred feet. Love invincible bears down every foe. Love uninfluenced allures unworthy ones to His breast. Love immutable cannot be affected by anything.

"Zion's Friend in nothing alters,  
Though all others may and do;  
His is love that never falters,  
Always to its object true;  
Happy Zion,  
Crowned with mercies ever new."

Search through God's blessed Word and you will see Him, in whatever grace or character He is revealed, as the chief, principal, and head of all. Asaph knew Him as such after he saw dissatisfaction written upon everything down here. After expressing of his assurance of Divine guidance, he says, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa. lxxiii. 25). None amongst the sons of the mighty, or amongst the children of men can be compared to a precious Christ. Look at Him as He is revealed in Isa. xli. 4: "I the LORD, the First, and with the last: I am He." A faithful Friend and constant Companion of His tried and tempted brethren. He is the First. He has gone before them in every conflict, trial, and temptation they possibly can experience, so that He might sweeten every bitter cup they have to drink, and from personal acquaintance with their sufferings, sympathise with them and bless them with the sweet enjoyment of His covenant affection. Turn with me to that wonderful description given of Him in Isa. lv., one of the most remarkable chapters in the whole of God's Book. "Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." To Joshua He appeared as "the Captain of the Lord's host" (Josh. v. 13—15). To Paul He was revealed as "the Captain of our salvation" (Heb. ii. 10) made perfect through sufferings. What sufferings? Those due to the whole of the members of His mystical body who are brought to experience fellowship with Him in them. In every affliction He was there before them, and blesses them with the assurance that in the fiercest furnace, and in the most painful paths, He will be JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH to them.

Now turn to Jer. xxx. 21, 22: "And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their Governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach unto Me; for who is this that engageth His heart to approach unto Me? saith the Lord. And ye shall be My people, and I will be your God." Here is "the Chiefest among ten thousand." They are noble in His nobility. Their welfare is in Him, their Governor. Their safety is in His drawing near to the Father for them. Their acceptance is secured by His approaching the throne of grace at their head. In His covenant engagements lie all their salvation, safety, and security. In the contemplation of an object so gracious and glorious we may

well exclaim in the language of the men of Israel to David, "Thou art worth ten thousand of us" (2 Sam. xviii. 3). Think about that. As we are brought to enjoy the rare excellences and incomparable beauties of King Jesus, the Leader and Commander of His people, the Chiefest among ten thousand, and Prince of the kings of the earth, we cry with all the power and energy of our spiritual nature, "*Thou art worth more than ten thousand of us!*" For, mark you, all that ten thousand of us are in the eye and estimation of the Father is because of what Christ is for us, to us, with us, and in us by the free-grace of God. Yes, Christ is chiefest and choicest in the hearts of His people. See how this is revealed in that marvellous chapter, Col. i. And here I would direct your attention to the characteristic word of that chapter—"ALL." When you get home, if you are sufficiently interested (for I find lots of lazy Christians in respect to searching the Word; I do not say there are any within these walls), get your Bibles, go through this chapter, and mark well every portion where the word "*all*" appears. You will see it in connection with every covenant blessing bestowed, and every beauty revealed, in Christ. Look at the tenth verse: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto *all pleasing*;" not *some pleasing*. You may rest assured that God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is not *half pleased* with the saints, but causes them to manifest the Spirit of Christ and the graces of the Spirit with which the Father is well and perfectly pleased. But at the fifteenth verse we read of the Chiefest among ten thousand thus: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature." What does that expression, "*every creature*," mean? You find it again in the twenty-third verse: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to *every creature* which is under heaven." Does that mean all mankind? Has the Gospel been preached to all mankind? Not at all! What, then, does it mean? It is the very same word which you find in Rom. viii. 22: "For we know that the whole creation (margin, *every creature*) groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." You find the same in Mark xvi. 15: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*." Does that mean all Adam's race? If so, it has never been fulfilled and never will be. The corresponding portion in Matt. xxviii. 19 says, "all nations." These are "the nations of them which are saved" (Rev. xxi. 24), all God's elect, all those redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb. All these shall have the Gospel brought to them without failure or miscarriage.

"The people of JEHOVAH'S choice  
Are registered on high,  
And they shall hear His sovereign voice,  
And by His grace draw nigh."

To all the heavenly, or new creation, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Firstborn, the Chief, the One in whom all true excellency is found; He who alone is able to explain the mystery of His Father's will to His brethren, and faithfully carry out every injunction laid upon Him as the Executor of that will. "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." If you will refer to Rom. viii. 29, you will find the same truth concerning Him. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren." Whenever He appears in the midst of His brethren, He is hailed as Chief and crowned Lord of all.

Look at the various titles given to Him by the Holy Ghost. Is He a Priest? Yes, and before Him all other priests must stand on one side. All the priests of the Old Testament dispensation retire at the approach of our Great High Priest. There are no priests now in the eyes of the Father but those whose priesthood stands in virtue of their union to the Great High Priest of His Church and people. Turn to Heb. iv. 14: "Seeing then that we have a GREAT HIGH PRIEST, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." In the twelfth verse you see Him set forth as the quick and powerful Word of God, the Divider between flesh and spirit, nature and grace, and the Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Is He a Shepherd? He is. There are faithful shepherds, and those who feed themselves and starve the flock. See Ezek. xxxiv. 1—10. But whatever the character of the shepherds may be, when the Shepherd and Bishop of souls appears, they must retire. See how blessedly Paul describes Him in Heb. xiii. 20, 21: "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Is He God? He is THE GREAT GOD and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus ii. 13). Is He a Rock? Isaiah sweetly describes Him as "A GREAT ROCK in a weary land" (Isa. xxxii. 2).

"Great Rock, for weary sinners made,  
When storms of sin infest the soul;  
Here let me rest my weary head,  
When lightnings blaze and thunders roll.



Blest with the pardon of her sin,  
My soul beneath Thy shade would lie ;  
And sing the love that took me in,  
And others left in sin to die."

In whatever character our most glorious Christ is described He must be chief. Is He a Corner-stone? "Behold, I lay in Sion A CHIEF CORNER-STONE, elect, precious; and He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter ii. 6). Is He a Shepherd? Peter says, "When THE CHIEF SHEPHERD shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter v. 4). Is He a King? It is because "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9—11). I love to dwell upon the peerless beauties of His person more than upon the priceless blessings of His hand. To me salvation would be unsatisfactory without the Saviour; the promises would not be precious without the Promiser; and blessings would be wanting without the presence of Him in whom I am blessed. Those of us to whom He has graciously revealed Himself in His beauty, bounty, and blessedness, anxiously wait for the time to come round when He will take us to Himself up yonder, and when

" — we shall see His face,  
And never, never sin ;  
There from the rivers of His grace,  
Drink endless pleasures in."

May He add His blessing. Amen.

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#### H Y M N .

JESUS, the glories of Thy face  
My songs of praise record ;  
I sing the overflowing grace  
Of my beloved Lord.

Thou art the Father's chief delight ;  
Thy beauty angels view—  
Thou art all fair in Zion's sight,  
And my Beloved too.

Of Thee the ancient prophets wrote,  
Of Thee let Israel sing ;  
And heav'n's vast choir, in ev'ry note,  
Praise my beloved King.

Thy precious name shall joy impart  
To all that are Thy own ;  
In life and death, O may my heart  
Be my Beloved's throne.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S HEAD.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JUNE 22ND, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His head is as the most fine gold."—Song of Solomon v. 11.

THE former part of this very precious paragraph contains the answer of the bride to the daughters of Jerusalem who had not been blessed with the soul-ravishing view of the Beloved, which had called forth her expressions of admiration and delight. In it we find a general description of the Beloved of her heart. "My Beloved is white and ruddy; the Chiefest among ten thousand." But generalizing will not do for the living child of God, either in the contemplation of His personal attractions, the spiritual blessings which abound by Him, or those treasures of experienced truth, mercy, and grace brought to light by His own glorious Gospel. The living in Jerusalem, as taught by the Spirit of truth, long for the experimental possession of those blessings which He brings home to the hearts of all those in hallowed association with Himself. As we look through God's blessed Word, we shall find in the expressions of spiritual experience, as flowing from the hearts of the saints, this personal intercourse with their living Head. It is not "Lord, save Thy people," that will express the desire of a living soul; but, "Lord, save me." "Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," can be intoned in public by proud professors; but, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is only breathed by burdened spirits before the throne. Look at a few personal inquiries: "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" (Psa. ci. 2); "O visit me with Thy salvation" (Psa. cvi. 4); "Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even Thy salvation, according to Thy Word" (Psa. cxix. 41); "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" (Song iii. 3). The sinner blessed with the love of the heavenly Bridegroom is oblivious to all other lovers. He is the one Object of the heart's affection, admiration, and adoration: hence

the particularizing of the varied excellencies revealed in Him by the Holy Ghost. Did you ever notice that saying of the Master in John xvi. 14? I know you have read it, but have you noticed it? For oftentimes we read without noticing. "He shall receive of Mine, and show it unto you." It is not, "He shall take *Me* ; but *Mine*." My blood for your redemption. My righteousness for your justification. My intercession for your acceptance. My glory for your security. It is the Spirit's delight to reveal that which is in Christ to meet and satisfy the necessity He has created in the heart of a living child. "He shall take of Mine." Where from? He shall take it from the written Word, He shall take it from the Father's everlasting covenant of grace for the comfort and consolation of the Father's children. Is a child of God depressed, desponding, oppressed with a sense of sin, and groaning for the enjoyment of God's salvation? The Spirit of truth must and will reveal that salvation unto it. Is a child of God labouring for deliverance from the prison-house of captivity? The Holy Ghost shall take of Christ, in His marvellous achievements of grace as Zion's Redeemer and Deliverer, and show them unto it. Is a child of God troubled and cast down because of daily and hourly corruptions? The Holy Spirit will reveal to it the Fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Is a child of God experiencing condemnation because of failure in respect to the demands of God's righteous law? The Holy Ghost must take of the Surety's spotless obedience and show it unto him. Is the child of God hungering and thirsting for the covenant provisions of God's house? The Holy Ghost will reveal to him the Master's table spread with the provisions of Divine love and grace, and will cause the Master's voice to be heard, saying, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song v. 1). Is the burdened seeker sighing and crying at mercy's door? Are the poor and needy seeking water, finding none, and their tongue failing for thirst? They want to pray, but know not how. "The Spirit will help *their* infirmities: for *they* know not what to pray for as *they* ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for *them* with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26). He will reveal to such a precious Christ, the all-prevailing Intercessor, the ever-powerful Advocate who opens His mouth for the dumb, pleads the cause of the poor, and maintains the right of God's afflicted ones. There is not a want or necessity produced in the heart of a tried and tempted child of God by the grace and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit, but He will supply according to God's riches in glory by Christ Jesus, to cheer, comfort, and encourage the weary pilgrim on his wilderness journey.

If we look through the whole of this book we shall find no name given to Him but that of Beloved. We cannot find Him there by the name of JEHOVAH, Christ, Saviour, or Emmanuel,

and yet He is there in the blessedness of all these. We find Him as our Deliverer from all doubts, fears, cares, and anxieties oftentimes experienced by us. He is revealed to us as God's Christ, whose name is as ointment poured forth to all those whom He brings into communion and fellowship with Himself. He is a gracious King reigning and ruling in the affections of His bride, and bringing her into the delightful chambers of His grace and glory. In our translation of Solomon's Song we look for the name of God, but we cannot find it. In the original it is found in that precious declaration of the mutual love of Christ and His bride in chap. viii. 6: "Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm: for love is strong as death: jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame" (Hebrew, "*The coals thereof are the flames of the fire of the Lord*"). The flames of the fire of JEHOVAH-JESUS' eternal, immutable love. In all the rest of the book we fail to find the name of God, and yet we enjoy His person and His presence there. We fail to find the name of Jesus, but we richly enjoy His salvation there. We fail to discover the name of Emmanuel, yet the King brings us into His house of wine and refreshes our souls with the aboundings of heavenly, spiritual, and eternal love. But let us, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of that blessed Spirit who inspired Solomon to write these words, seek for a little comfort, encouragement, and instruction from the same:—

"His head is as the most fine gold."

I.—We will seek to know Scripturally and spiritually what is meant by "*His head*."

II.—Examine the metaphor—"Is as the most fine gold."

I.—"*His head*." We will look at several portions of God's most Holy Word which may serve to throw light upon this metaphorical and illustrative expression. Turn to 1 Cor. xi. 3: "But I would have you know." And I would have *you* know, for the very same reason that the apostle thus addresses his Corinthian friends. In these days, and in every age of the Church, Satan will do his utmost to hide the Headship and sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ from those in experimental union with Him. "But I would have you know that the Head of every man is Christ." Who are we to understand by "*every man*?" If we take the words in the universal or unlimited sense, we can see in them the glorious truth that Christ is Head of and over all things to His Church. Did you notice that declaration of the sovereignty of Christ which I read for you in Rev. i. 17, 18? "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Our blessed Lord, as Head over all things, saves or damns whom He pleases. I say

this with all solemnity : When any enter that dark abode over the portal of which is written, "Hope never entered here," a sovereign Saviour holds the key. The sovereign prerogatives of JEHOVAH-JESUS form a delightful theme for faith to meditate upon.

"Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown  
Hang on His firm decree :  
He sits on no precarious throne.  
Nor borrows leave TO BE."

"The head of every man is Christ." What are we to understand by those words—"every man." Not universal man. Turn to chapter iv. and verse 5 : "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts ; and *then shall every man have praise of God.*" This cannot include the wicked who shall then be the subjects of His eternal wrath. You will find the same expression in chapter xii. 7 : "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal"—that is, *every man* in union with the Christ of God. To every member of the one body the Spirit's manifestation is given, and that manifestation is given for the profit of all the members, for there is no manifestation or revelation of the Spirit without profit. Christ is the Head of all the members of His body the Church. "And the head of the woman is the man." Here we obtain a view of Christ in His mystical character. He is the anointed Head and Representative of grace. He is the appointed Servant of the Father. He is the voluntary Surety of the covenant. He is the Responsible One to obey, suffer, bleed, and die for the bride of His heart. He is the faithful Steward to confer every covenant blessing designed for her ; for the everlasting safety and security of His Church in Himself, and for its perfect presentation before His Father's face in glory. "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 17, 18). Though He is exalted high above every name, yet, at this very moment, He forgets not His suffering members, but opens His mouth for the dumb, pleads successfully the right of the poor, and maintains the right of His afflicted ones.

"*The Head of Christ is God.*" Look throughout the whole history of our blessed Saviour upon earth, and you will see Him ever obedient to the Father, submissive to His will, and acting according to the Father's purpose and good pleasure from first to last. In Isa. xlii. 1, the Father expresses His delight in the person and service of Christ : "Behold My Servant whom I uphold ; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth." We have this Scripture

quoted in Matt. xii. 18, where we see the Son as the Servant, while service affects not His glorious equality as Son with the Father. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand" (John iii. 35). Listen to the Son's declaration of the confidence reposed in Him by the Father: "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they (the given ones) might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." That Christ was the Servant and Equal of the Father can be proved from many portions of the New Testament Scriptures. Look at these: "My Father is greater than I" (John xiv. 28). "I and My Father are one" (John x. 30). One in nature; one in essence; one in purpose; one in design: one in desire; one in determination; one in the grand achievements of grace, and one in the salvation and glorification of the elect; yet the truth holds good: "My Father is greater than I." In this we see the fact that "the Head of Christ is God." Here I would ask, What would the Lord Jesus Christ have been, and what would He now, or ever, be in the experience of His people, were it not for the Father's appointment of Him as Head of His body the Church? Were it not for the fact that the Christ of God was set apart in the counsels of eternity to be the Surety and Saviour of His people, and in their place perform everything for them, and see that by His blessed Spirit every covenant blessing is performed in them, what would He be? Nothing at all to His bride, to the exercised hearts of those who are taught to seek after Him with their plaintive cry, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?"

*"His head."* Having considered the Head of Christ is God the Father, we are now brought to contemplate Him in the glory of His own eternal power and Godhead. He is "the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person" (Heb. i. 3). If you turn to Dan. ii. 37, 38, you will read concerning Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over all. Thou art that head of gold." Sovereign majesty was manifested in the person of Nebuchadnezzar who was the believing head of an idolatrous empire. In mentioning him, I do it for the purpose of setting before you that glorious truth which he confessed so fully as recorded in Daniel iv. 34—37: "And I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the

inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" Here we see the glorious sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ. As God over all blessed for ever, He is Head of His Church and people. We rejoice to know Him as the Surety of the covenant, the Mediator between God and elect men, who, having accomplished their salvation, has entered into heaven's highest glory invested with all authority, dominion, and power for His people, while all in heaven, earth, and hell bow down before Him and acknowledge that He is Lord and Sovereign of all, to the glory of God the Father. In the words "His head" we behold His glorious divinity. His Godhead shines forth in every thought, word, look, and act of His mediatorial work. That which crowns His glorious salvation is His divinity. This is revealed to faith wherever He appears. It matters not how deep His humiliation, how terrible His sufferings, or bitter His agony, the Great I AM appears in Him. He was weak, weary, and worn, yet the great and mighty God. He was the meek and lowly Lamb of God, yet "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. vi. 15).

"There's not a ray of glory known  
Around the great JEHOVAH'S throne,  
Which my Redeemer does not wear,  
Proclaiming His own Godhead there."

Turn with me to Psalm cxxxv. 5, 6: "For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. Look at Psalm cxiii. 4—8: "The LORD is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high?" or, according to the marginal rendering, "*exalteth Himself to dwell on high*?" Yes, He exalteth Himself to dwell on high in the affections of His people, and over all things for them. "Who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people." These are precious and glorious truths, but hated and ignored by the carnal mind. During the whole of His earthly pilgrimage, and now in the testimony of the Holy Ghost, and in the appearance of that testimony in the hearts of His people, the Christ of God is despised and rejected. Wherever the sovereignty of Christ is acknowledged, it is sure to meet with the enmity and opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil. But though hated and opposed, He is the eternally loved one of His Father, and adored, worshipped, and glorified by the whole of His elect, redeemed, and regenerate people.

"*His head*." Now turn to that blessed declaration given in Matt. viii. 20. There is much sweetness and preciousness in this

chapter to my soul. There I see revealed just that Christ who is suited to my wants and necessities—the Christ who has put away my sins and bears with me in all my infirmities—the Christ, who, though high in the glory of God the Father, yet comes down to the deepest depths of my sorrows, troubles, and distress. In the first part of the chapter He is seen touching a leper, but contracting no defilement, while He imparts His own purity and perfection. The second part reveals Him healing with a word the centurion's servant: "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." At His touch the fever of Peter's wife's mother fled, and health was restored to her. Those possessed with devils came to Him, "and He cast the spirits out with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, *Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*" For many a long year that was a puzzle to me. How could our Lord Jesus Christ who had a perfectly sinless body, free from all imperfection and impurity—a body which sin could not mar or defile, and in which none of sin's effects could be found—how could He take our infirmities and bear our sicknesses? Ah, my dear friends, the mystery was cleared up in that personal pronoun, "*our.*" Not His infirmities, not His sicknesses; but He was compassed about and burdened with *our* infirmities and sicknesses. It is a precious mercy for the poor, tried, and exercised child of God who is bowed down beneath the weight of physical and mental infirmity, to know that Jesus, his loving Head and Representative, has borne it all for him. But this is the verse to which I desire to direct your attention: "And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; *but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.*" He was brought to that low spot for the good of His people. Have you ever been brought there? I have, and so have some of you; for you know what it is sometimes to seek for a place of rest and quietness, and to experience that which is so beautifully expressed in the words of the benediction, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding." Instead of peace we are in the midst of conflict. Instead of rest we find disquietude. Instead of ease we are filled with distress in the silent watches of the night, when all around are sleeping, our wearied eyelids and aching heads seek for "balmy sleep, nature's sweet restorer;" but it comes not. We then remember the words of the Master, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

"When vexing thoughts within me rise,  
And, sore dismayed, my spirit dies,  
Yet He, who once vouchsafed to bear  
The sickening anguish of despair,  
Shall sweetly soothe, shall gently dry,  
The throbbing heart, the streaming eye."

Rest He found not because the disquietude of His people was



His. Now He has found and enjoys His rest, according to the words of the prophet: "His rest shall be glorious" (Isaiah xi. 10). The rest of a precious Christ is in the bosom of the Father, and, blessed be His holy name, He also finds it in the heaving and anxious bosom of the child of God in whom the Spirit of adoption gently cries, "Abba, Father." In all such hearts, a precious Christ, who sought rest in the days of His flesh and found none, now finds and enjoys a resting place and quiet peace. The fact that the Son of Man had not where to lay His head, leads us to contemplate His sacred humanity. His precious body and mind experienced temptation, toil, trial, and tribulation unknown to all beside Himself, even to His brethren whom He brings into the sweet participation of rest with Him through His want of it. Look at Him as the Head of His people going forth to sorrow and to death for their salvation. In the school of human suffering He learned how to perfectly sympathise with His poor and afflicted people in every temptation they experience, and in every trial which brings them down to the dust of spiritual death where they cry to Him for deliverance therefrom. That is a very blessed Scripture which you will find in Isaiah lxiii. 9: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

"As man, a Man of sorrows, Thou  
Hast suffered every human woe,  
And thus enthroned in glory now  
Canst pity all Thy saints below.  
Sweet thought, my Saviour, but for this  
I could not tell my grief to Thee:  
Nor hope that Thou, midst all Thy bliss  
And glory, Lord, couldst feel for me."

It is our high privilege with Paul to know and confess, "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). Thus we see our blessed Lord as the Head of power, sovereignty, and dominion, and of suffering, sympathy, and succour to His Church. And we delight, yet grieve, to behold Him sweating, groaning, dying to satisfy the claims of His Father's justice, and in the set time to favour Zion—to satisfy those cravings and longings which He has created by the grace of His Spirit in our hearts.

"*His head.*" We have been singing,—

"The Head that once was crowned with thorns,  
Is crowned with glory now;  
A royal diadem adorns  
The mighty Victor's brow."

High in the heights of glory our most glorious Christ is crowned by the Father as Head over all things to His Church. Notice how this is set before us in Eph. i. 17—23: "That the God of

our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him : the eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Now turn to Col. i. 16 : " For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by Him, and for Him : and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church : who is the beginning : the Firstborn from the dead : that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." We see this glorious fact in Paul's epitome of Divinity given in Phil. ii. 5—11 : " Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." With Him in yonder glory, though they are upon earth, His living members enjoy the blessings and privileges of the everlasting covenant of grace. Ay, and those of His who appear to be wholly swallowed up with earth and earthly things shall be brought by Him to acknowledge Him Head over all things to and for the Church. If we confess our oneness and allegiance to Him we are sure to meet with the world's scorn and hatred.

" *His head.*" Turn with me to Paul's testimony in Eph. v. 23, 24 : " For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church : and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." What a glorious view we here obtain of Christ the heavenly Husband, the Head of His body. Christ in His Divine nature is the Head of His mediatorial kingdom and work. Christ in His human

nature is beheld as the Head of His elect and redeemed brethren. Christ risen and ascended to the heights of glory is Head over all things to His Church. But here we see Him God and Man, the Head of His Church. "*The husband is the head of the wife.*" Why was this designed? For him to oppress, to reign over, and to overbear? No such thing, though a wife who reverences her husband will never object in spirit before her God, like Sarah, to call him lord. Why speak I thus? To lead your minds away from the natural to the spiritual, to a glorious truth revealed in God's blessed Word. The husband is the head of the wife to provide for, protect, and perfect her. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ is the Husband and the Head of His Church, having taken it to Himself in covenant to provide for every necessity she may experience, protect her from every danger, and perfect her with Himself in eternal glory. It is a blessed privilege to know Him as the Head of the Church. Turn with me to Rom. xii. 4, 5: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." You see the same in 1 Cor. xii. 12: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him." It is of God's mercy that I do not occupy a position in the body of Christ according to my prayers, desires, or wishes, but according to the good pleasure of the Father's will. "And if they were all one member, where were the body? but now are they many members, yet but one body." The Lord Jesus Christ is the great and glorious Head of His one body, from whom every influence, motive, and act of the body proceeds. Whatever the body does, the spring of action is in the head. Does my hand see, hear, think, consider, or influence the body? No! The head sees, thinks, considers, and influences the whole body. According to the thoughts of the head the body is provided for. Thus I, a poor uncomely member of my Lord's body, realising my oneness with Him and enjoying sweet and blessed association and communion with Him, find that He, my precious Head and Husband, has treasured up for me with undisturbed security all that the Father designed for me. These are not according to my vain, ignorant, and fleshly thoughts, but according to the eternal thoughts of love and peace which Christ my Head has for me. He, as the Husband and Head of His bride, ever thinks for her. Solomon says: "The wise man's eyes are in his head" (Eccles. ii. 14). Where are yours? My spiritual eyes are in my Head. Up yonder, in the heights of glory, He sees every member of His body; He beholds His bride, and notes everything concerning her, all her anxieties, cares, and necessities, and has given her His gracious promise

that He will be JEHOVAH-JIREH to her in all places whithersoever she shall come. O my soul, whatever be thy anxieties or perplexities, thy Head will see to every one of them.

II.—Examine the metaphor—"Is as the most fine gold." This metaphor, no doubt, refers to the appearance of the head of a nation crowned with gold and jewels. The majesty and sovereignty of JEHOVAH-JESUS is set forth in this light in Rev. xiv. 14: "On His head were many crowns." These set before our minds the Lord Jesus Christ reigning over all things for His Father's glory and His people's good. His Headship is described in the original by the double expression, "gold, gold." As He is viewed in His divinity, humanity, humiliation, or exaltation, He is "gold, gold." The bride, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, seems to ransack all creation to find suitable metaphors to show forth the superlative excellencies of the chief Object of her heart's affection and admiration. Why "gold, gold?" To show forth His matchless perfections. In the first place, this double expression denotes brightness and brilliancy; and, in the second place, firmness and fixedness. What metal have we so precious, pure, and perfect as gold? What is it that the heart of the miser and the earth-worm seeks after and is determined to have in possession? It is gold. What is it that the living child of God seeks after, and which alone will fill his heart with satisfaction, gratification, adoration, and praise? It is the revelation of that blessed and adorable One who, in His thoughts, purposes, and acts of love to His bride, was ever peerless in purity and perfection. In the contemplation of this we are constrained to sing those precious words of Watts:

"His head, the dear majestic head,  
That cruel thorns did wound,  
See what immortal glories shine,  
And circle it around."

In that head the perfection of wisdom is found. In the heart of our beloved Emmanuel the perfection of love abounds. Blessed be God, the Holy Ghost will not fail in communicating these to the hearts of those for whom they were designed. There is not a design of love, grace, or mercy which the Father has entrusted to Him for His people but they shall experimentally possess. Every thought of His heart, every look of His eye, every word of His lip, every action of His body for them while He was here upon earth or before the throne in glory, must be theirs in all the glorious and unsullied perfection with which He holds them. Not a stain shall mar the fair beauty of a single blessing designed in infinite love for the bride. Not a touch of Satan shall soil the comeliness of Christ which the Father decreed for the Church, and which the Surety holds for her in undisturbed security. Is sin my daily grief? His salvation for me is as perfect and precious as infinite wisdom could make

it. I do love to dwell and feed upon the blessed saying of dear old William Gadsby, which has oftentimes thrilled through my heart, "It is a salvation which God could not mend and devils cannot mar." Am I bowed down with infirmity, and know not how to pray? The intercession of my gracious Lord is all-powerful and all-prevailing for me. Are my enemies too many for me to cope with? He is all-glorious as He goes forth riding prosperously in majesty, truth, and righteousness, conquering and to conquer all my foes and His.

"All power and wisdom, love and grace,  
Are seen in our Emmanuel's face;  
All glorious in the Father's view,  
The brightness of His glory too."

Therefore, in whatever character He is presented to our view by God the ever-blessed Spirit—in His spotless Manhood, in His glorious Godhead, in His mediatorial engagements and transactions, in His appearing before the face of the Father to bring to a successful issue everything in the covenant concerning us—we see purity, preciousness, and perfection, and Himself our All in all. Knowing and feeling this, we thank God for this part of the bride's adoring description of Him:

"His head is as the most fine gold."

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

### HYMN.

EXALTED on His glorious throne,  
Dwells Zion's *covenant* Head;  
And sends His choicest blessings down,  
For all the chosen seed.

He is our *ruling* Head, alone  
In heaven and earth He reigns;  
'Tis His authority we own,  
Whose blood removes our stains.

He is our *living* Head, in whom  
His members ever live:  
From Him the special blessings come,  
JEHOVAH deigns to give.

He is our *everlasting* Head,  
For us exalted high:  
Because He lives, He has once said,  
That we shall never die.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S LOCKS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JUNE 29TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His locks are bushy and black as a raven."—Song of Solomon v. 11.

UNSEARCHABLE riches and everlasting might in our JEHOVAH-JESUS dwell, and though it has pleased God to give us a true and infallible account of His rare and matchless excellences, not a thousandth part of them have ever been revealed to the most highly favoured, the most deeply taught, or the most sweetly indulged of the members of His spiritual body.

The Holy Ghost has been pleased to put all nature under contribution for illustrations, metaphors, and figures to show forth the beauty, grandeur, and glory of Zion's Beloved. The mineral kingdom cannot provide sufficient diamonds or gems to describe His glory. The vegetable kingdom is unable to produce roses, lilies, and flowers to show forth His sweetness and grace. The animal kingdom presents illustrations of His majesty and meekness. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. v. 5), who breaks through every obstacle for His people, and before whom all the adversaries of His Church must quail and flee. He is the Lamb of God (John i. 29), meek, gentle, and loving to the weaklings of His flock. Tenderly He deals with those who cannot manage their own affairs, who cannot take a single step alone, and who are unable to think, look, speak, or act for themselves in any way without manifesting some weakness or infirmity. Yes, this is perfectly true in the case of him who now addresses you. There may be some of more superior metal than myself, I say, there may be, but I do not say there are, and I tell you honestly and candidly I do not think there are, for God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts xvii. 26). The more a child of God is brought into the enjoyment of His

lovingkindness and tender mercy, the more it will mourn over its own shortcomings and infirmities. The more a lamb, or sheep, in Christ's flock feels the warm encirclings of His loving arms, the gentle pressure to His bosom, the more it will lament and weep over its conscious weakness, weariness, and woe. We know the pleasure and the pain of that experience expressed in those two lines by Dr. Watts:

"The more Thy glories strike mine eyes,  
The humbler I shall lie."

The more we are brought to feed upon heavenly provision, the more we shall hunger and thirst after it. The more we are carried in the arms of everlasting love, the more we shall beg to be carried. We are like spoiled children in this respect. I have known some who have cried, "Father, carry me!" and the father has carried them until all his strength and patience has been exhausted. But, my dear friends, there is no exhausting the strength and patience of our soul's Beloved. He carries, and He will carry. He bears, and He will bear. He upholds, and He will uphold. This is in accordance with that glorious chapter which I read for you this morning, Isaiah xl. It is a precious chapter to me, and has been for many a long year. Look at this: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." There is a glorious Carrier for you. But let me ask some of you old folk to look at chapter xlv. 3, 4, and may you carry it home with you, not simply in your Bibles, but in your hearts and spiritual understandings: "Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by Me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; even I will carry, and will deliver you." There you behold a glorious sight! The weak babe, the strong young man, and the enfeebled veteran carried in the arms of everlasting love. But it is ours this morning to meditate upon a very precious portion of God's most Holy Word, and consider some of the rare excellences which appear in the Bridegroom of the Church. The bride, having charged the daughters of Jerusalem concerning her Bridegroom, is met with a question which betrays their lack of the knowledge she possessed of the Bridegroom's beauties and excellences: "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" But their ignorance was the cause of this glorious description of the Bridegroom by the bride. Here I would ask you again to notice that little word "*so*." "That thou dost *so* charge us." In the bride's inquiries and charges, Christ was All in all. It has been said of me, "Whenever he opens his mouth, he has nothing to talk about but Christ." When I went to preach God's truth at Edge-

green, in Lancashire, after I had been there a few months, some of the mad professors said, "That man cannot preach but it is all Christ. It is Christ everything with him, and none of the variety of the Word." Oh, my dear friends, if Christ appears not in the *variety of the Word*, the variety may go for me.

"Christ is my All; where should I go?  
Without Him I can nothing do!  
Helpless and weak, a sinner great,  
Yet in His righteousness complete."

Wherever I may go, or whatever I may do, may it be my lot to find and acknowledge Him. Do I sing? I desire to hear the voice of my Beloved. Do I pray? I want to feel an interest in my Saviour's sweet intercession. Do I preach? I long to know that it is no more I that preach, but Christ preaching through and by me. Whenever I appear before you, the desire of my heart is, that He who is "the chiefest among ten thousand" may be seen by the eyes of your spiritual understanding. I thank God that I know it is so in many instances.

"*My Beloved is white.*" There we see Him in the purity of His person. "*My Beloved is ruddy.*" There we behold Him in the perfection of His mediatorial sufferings and sorrows. "*My Beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand.*" It matters not where we appear, in what company we are found, or how numerous our spiritual associates may be, Christ is All and in all. We love to dwell upon His beauties. A passing glance will never truly satisfy the heart once smitten with His charms.

"With Him I daily love to walk,  
Of Him my soul delights to talk;  
On Him I cast my every care;  
Like Him one day I shall appear."

To know Him in the inexpressible realities of heart-communion is the joy and delight of living and loving souls; and with them, whatever be the theme, doctrine, experience, practice, or persons, Christ is the chief. "*His head is as the most fine gold.*" Here we see JEHOVAH the Father the Head of Christ. We admire the glory of His Godhead. We adore Him in His glorious sovereignty. We know Him as the Head of His Church. As the Head He thinks for the whole body. He sees all its concerns and cares. He governs all its movements, and controls every action. He supplies every want, and ministers to every necessity. He is most precious. The experience of this caused Asaph, after many painful exercises, to cry out: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa. lxxiii. 25). It is not: "There is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." Comparison utterly fails before the revelation of a precious Christ to the waiting hearts of His elect and redeemed brethren. Our dear friend and brother Rolleston set this forth most blessedly the



other Tuesday night, when he said: "As a loving wife rejoices to see all honour resting upon her husband, so the bride, the Church, loves to see her heavenly Bridegroom crowned with majesty, glory, dominion, and power, and in Him concentrated every beauty and grace which adorns her person."

"Jesus, in Thee, my soul's delight,  
What matchless beauties tempt my sight;  
Compared with Thee, the solar ray  
In shades and darkness dies away."

Now we will for a little while consider the precious portion which I have read to you as my text,

"His locks are bushy and black as a raven."

"*His locks.*" What are we to understand by these words? The bride, by the leading and guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, is captivated with the incomparable beauties revealed in her Beloved. She contemplates Him in His sovereignty and kingly power. She glories in His might, majesty, and dominion. She delights to particularise, and in particularising she admires the locks springing and flowing from His head. In these we are led to view the fruits of His sovereignty, majesty, and Headship over all things to His Church. As spiritual beings in union with Christ we love to follow where His good Spirit leads. I love to go to the spring, the source, and foundation of all things, and into a Scriptural and spiritual understanding of the doings, excellencies, and beauties of my Husband, Head, and Lord. I love to trace the wonders of His grace, not only from the time when He first drew me with the cords of His love, and revealed Himself in me, but, to coin a phrase, I go back to a time before time was, or, to a period before periods began. I delight to be led by God the ever-blessed Spirit to contemplate those glorious covenant transactions which secured the salvation and glorification of the whole elect of God, when the Lord Jesus Christ was set up as the Head and Representative of grace, as the Surety of the everlasting covenant, as the Sponsor or God-Father of His people, the only true God-Father that ever lived. We know of no God-Father but that blessed and adorable One, who, in all His excellency, glory, might, and power held Himself responsible, and vowed and promised to do, not three things, but everything, for His eternally-loved ones. During a life of sorrow and suffering upon earth He did all that He promised, to obey, satisfy, and magnify His Father's law for us, and now by the power of the Holy Ghost He brings us to the enjoyment of all that He accomplished for us as our Sponsor and Surety. This is a marvellous mercy for me, for whenever a sense of responsibility steals over me, either on the ground of law or Gospel, condemnation is sure to attend it. "For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10). Are demands made upon me on Gospel ground?

The feeling sense of my responsibility crushes me, and lays me low before the throne of sovereign mercy, crying, "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me. Do Thou in me that which Thou hast demanded from me." It is my mercy to know that every spiritual demand made upon me by the convicting power of the Holy Ghost is the evidence and earnest of the full supply of the same according to the Father's riches in glory by Christ Jesus. I do love such declarations as those in Isa. xxvi. 12: "LORD, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us;" and Psal. lvii. 2: "I will cry unto God most high: unto God that performeth all things for me." There is misery in the depths, majesty in the heights, and mercy in experimental possession. Here I see JEHOVAH the Transactor of all my affairs. Sometimes He comes and sweetly assures me that all things work together for my good, until my heart is melted into adoring gratitude; at other times I am left with my spirit bowed down with dreariness and despondency.

"*His locks.*" As His head denotes His majesty, sovereignty, and kingdom, so His locks flowing from His head denote His thoughts, promises, purposes, and counsels. See how the Psalmist admired their perfection and beauty in Psal. xxxiii. 11: "The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generation." See Psal. xl. 5: "Many, O LORD my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to usward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." "Thy thoughts are very deep" (Psal. xcii. 5). Look at Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18: "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee." The thoughts of our great and glorious Head will stand to a thousand generations, when all our fleshly, religious, and *experimental* thoughts are buried in eternal oblivion. Who can tell the preciousness of His thoughts? In His gracious promise to perform His own good work toward His tempted and tried people, He says: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" of all sufferings and sorrows which you experience in the pathway of tribulation (Jer. xxix. 11). See how the unsearchable nature of Christ's thoughts are set before us in Isa. lv. 8, 9. I love to read this blessed chapter in the light of the new covenant, that light in which I have endeavoured to set it before you more than once, twice, or thrice. A covenant command goes forth to a covenant people: "*Seek ye the LORD.*" Mark well the punctuation. "*While He may be found call ye upon Him.*" You may rest assured that is the only time when we can call upon Him in spirit and in truth. At any other time we may cry and shout, but our prayers will be shut out, and

the face of His throne will be covered with the thick cloud of judgment. "*While He is near let the wicked forsake His way.*" You may depend upon it, I can only forsake my wretched ways when He is near to me, and at no other time. "And the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." The thoughts of our most glorious and exalted Head are thoughts of eternal, immutable, and constant love. I love and delight to dwell upon the personal glory of Him, who, throughout a long eternity, is ever dwelling with thoughts of ineffable affection upon His own.

"*His locks.*" In these we have revealed His deep, firm, immutable, and immoveable counsels. Here we behold Him in covenant oneness with the Father before the worlds were framed, through time, and to all eternity. By His faithfulness to them He defeats and frustrates all the counsels of hell. Has heaven its counsels? Hell will have its counsels too. This you see in the words of our Lord to Peter: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates (*or counsels*) of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). Now look at that precious portion, Isaiah xxv. 1: "O LORD, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." Marvellous mysteries beam forth from the council chambers of eternity as the covenant engagements of our Surety with the Father for His people are revealed. Christ was faithful to the Father, and the Father was faithful to Christ. Throughout a life of sorrow, pain, and woe, the gracious Sponsor was true to His people; and when He came as the Father's righteous Servant to render an account of His service, and as the Father contemplated that service, He could detect no deceit, evasion, or unrighteousness at all. At every point the faithful Surety could say, "I have glorified Thee on earth" (John xvii. 3). The counsels of JEHOVAH-JESUS with JEHOVAH the Father were ever faithful and true, and now, as He stands before the throne, the Father sees and acknowledges Him faithful in the communication of every covenant blessing to those whom He redeemed with His most precious blood, and are the fruit of His groans, sorrows, and agonies.

"*His locks.*" His exceeding great and precious promises flow so gracefully and graciously from His covenant Headship. Now mark this well: The Son, the Surety, the Saviour, the Sponsor promised to do all that was necessary for the eternal salvation and security of His people. The Father promised to

give every needful blessing to His people. The Holy Ghost promised to work every needful grace in His people. Did one person in the blessed Three promise? The whole Three were mutually interested. That which the Father purposed was treasured up in the Son in the form of promise to be secured to His people by the witnessing and sealing of God the ever-blessed Spirit. This we see in 2 Cor. i. 18, 22: "But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea." You see that "the Son of God, Jesus Christ," was the sum total of the apostle's preaching, because in Him the Father had blessed His people with every needful covenant blessing. This is marrow and fatness to our souls as the Holy Ghost is pleased to reveal it in our waiting and wanting hearts. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." O what a glorious Gospel! The Father purposing all things for His people, promising all things to His people, and performing all things in His people. "Now He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." Here we see all the promises of the covenant secured and sure to all the seed royal of heaven (Rom. iv. 16). The "Yea" of the Father in covenant is the "Amen" of the Spirit in living experience. And, let me ask, what are all the promises of God in Christ Jesus without the grace and indwelling of God the Holy Ghost? What are all Christ's thoughts, counsels, and promises without the revelation of them to me and in me by the Witness of the covenant, the Glorifier of the Father's Christ? Nothing whatever. It is from the Headship and sovereignty of Christ that all the beauties and glories of His person and salvation flow to living souls in union with Him, causing them to sing,—

"The work which His goodness began,  
The arm of His strength will complete,  
His promise is 'Yea and Amen,'  
And never was forfeited yet:  
Things future, nor things that are now,  
Not all things below nor above  
Can make Him His purpose forego,  
Or sever my soul from His love."

"*His locks.*" I delight to contemplate everything that flows from my covenant Head. Look at His performances. You see them by the eye of faith from the lowly manger in Bethlehem to the rugged tree on Calvary. You see them flowing in all His thoughts of love, in all His looks of fond affection. When Peter fell, a look of love from Jesus' eyes broke up the fountain of the great deep of godly sorrow, and Peter sought where to weep bitterly. In every word of His mouth, whether of judgment to His enemies, or mercy to His friends, righteousness

is revealed. Listen to His own declaration: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John iv. 34). It was the Father's will that every jot and tittle of His law should be obeyed, and it was the eager delight of the God-Man to do it. Down into the depths of sin, sorrow, and soul-trouble, into which His people must be brought, He willingly descended. Down to the very depths of my most degrading sins a precious Christ humbled Himself to bear them with all their consequences on my behalf. Down into the lowlands of all my necessities, wants, infirmities, imperfections, doubts, fears, cares, and anxieties, He willingly wended His way. When in gloomy, dark Gethsemane, the sorrows of hell encompassed Him, and JEHOVAH'S judgment of sin was experienced by His sinless soul, He prayed saying, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done" (Matt. xxvi. 42). He never ceased until He could say, "It is finished" (John xix. 30). Thus we behold Him as the God-Man Mediator of His Church and people, constant in His thoughts of love, faithful in His covenant counsels, precious in His gracious promises, and glorious in His perfect performances for us, while our adoring hearts rejoice in the blessed assurance of our interest in the love of His Father and ours. Thus blessed, we feelingly join in the song of the victorious followers of the Lamb upon the sea of glass: "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest" (Rev. xv. 3, 4). It matters not how we look at Him, the glorious truth holds good—

"In every office He sustains,  
In every victory He gains,  
In every counsel of His will,  
He's precious to His people still."

"*His locks are bushy.*" This leads our minds into the contemplation of the benevolence, bounty, and liberality of a covenant God in Christ. His thoughts of love, like the hairs of our heads, are innumerable. Of His works, the Psalmist could say, "O LORD, how manifold are Thy works!" (Psa. civ. 24). When He bestows grace, He does it without stint. He is no niggard. There is no penuriousness in our God. Does He give life? He will give it more abundantly (John x. 10). Has He given grace? He will give more grace (James iv. 6). Has He indulged thee with the communication of one covenant promise? It will prove to be, in thy experience, the seed of an abundant crop of covenant promises to thy waiting heart. Has He given to thee the enjoyment of one of His thoughts of love? Verily there will be a bushy crop of His eternal thoughts of love in thy enlightened understanding. Has He brought thee

to stand still, look on, and behold Him doing wondrously? He will yet teach thee that all things prepared for thee before all worlds, were performed for thee by His Son, and shall be perfected in thee by His Spirit. Yes, blessed be God, He will cause thee to acknowledge with joyful heart, "The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me" (Psalm xxxviii. 8). I love that precious expression in many of the writings of Paul which has come with peculiar force and sweetness to my heart many times of late: "*much more.*" You will find it several times in Romans v., where you will notice how fruitful, flourishing, and abundant are the gifts of JEHOVAH'S grace. Speaking of the mediatorial work and sufferings of our Lord and Master, Paul says, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die." "A righteous man." One of your proper, precise, stern, unbending creatures, who acts up to the mark, but will not stir one step in the way of compassion or pity. "Yet, peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die." What does that mean? God declares, "There is none good, no, not one." Well, it means a man of generous and benevolent disposition; it matters not what the bulk of his body may be, his heart appears too big for it. If he comes across poor, suffering humanity, out goes his heart to its relief, though he may be often told that *charity begins at home*. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Not righteous men, not good men, but unrighteous and bad men, Yes, as bad as sin and Satan could make them. This reminds me of a reporter who took down a free-grace sermon. Shortly after, he waited upon the preacher "with the report of the sermon—just as it was delivered, with one exception—a slip of the tongue. You said, 'As sure as there is a God in heaven all the good people go to hell, and all the bad people go to heaven! This I have corrected.'" But the preacher meant what he said. All who are good in their own esteem, living and dying so, must go to hell, while all those who are bad and vile in their own eyes, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, must go to heaven. Those of us who are brought to experience our badness are brought still further to know that "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Is that sufficient? No. It is the seed of a prolific crop of blessing. See! "*Much more* then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Saved from what? Saved from the dominion and power of the sins we are sensible of—saved from the terrible temptations which sorely beset us—saved from the accursed influences which surround us, by which devils aim our overthrow, and the Pharisaic world seeks for our halting, and for the opportunity to say, "So would we have it." The proud

professor is ever ready to taunt the child of God with believing that he has a license to sin that grace may abound, which is a *pious* lie. Thank God we have been taught to glory in Paul's free-grace declaration, "Where sin abounded, grace did *much* more abound" (Rom. v. 20).

"*His locks are bushy and black as a raven.*" Wonderful contrasts appear in the metaphors which describe the personal beauties and glories of Jesus. I have told you that the Holy Ghost puts all nature under contribution to describe the unrivalled excellencies of our most glorious Christ. Does He compare His loveliness and meekness to the dove? He makes use of the cunning, mysterious, impenetrable raven to show forth His deep and unsearchable designs. Here His locks are black, denoting eternal youth and vigour. A precious Christ with His bounties, blessings, and benefits, can never grow old, fade away, or perish, and that nature possessed by sinners in oneness with Christ is ever young, never grows old. In Rev. i. 14 His head and His hairs are described as "white like wool, as white as snow." This sets forth the eternity of His being and attributes. Grey hairs, which evidence weakness, infirmity, and decay, are not to be found upon our Jesus. Look at the description given of Ephraim in Hosea vii. 8, 9. Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people. "Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, *grey hairs are here and there upon him*, yet he knoweth it not." Though Ephraim's hairs grow grey, and strangers come upon him, yet his God and Saviour remains ever the same. He is the same in His love, the same in His compassion, the same in His care. Does Ephraim sin? His God will save. Does Ephraim wander? His God will restore. Concerning Ephraim, JEHOVAH saith, "Ephraim is My dear son! Ephraim is My pleasant child! for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore, My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him" (Jer. xxxi. 20). This is our JEHOVAH-JESUS. He is unchangeable in the counsels of His heart, the purposes of His love, the promises of His mouth, and the performances of His hand. In His power, patience, and perfections He is immutable. No sign of weakness, decay, or infirmity can ever be found in Him. He is ever young, ever vigorous, and ever beautiful in His person, and in all that flows from Him through the predestinating purposes of the Father.

You will find this blessedly set forth throughout the epistle to the Hebrews. In ch. i. He is revealed in a quotation from Psalm cii. 25—27: "And Thou, LORD, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thy hands: they shall perish: but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." Grey hairs, weakness,

infirmity, or decay can never be found in Him. "*His locks are bushy and black as a raven.*" Why as a raven? Because of the concealed habits and artful secrecy of that bird. This indicates and sets forth the unspeakable glories of Christ's person, the unsearchable riches of His kingdom, and the inscrutable treasures of His love. Here we may sing,

"Thy works of grace, how bright they shine!  
How deep Thy counsels! how Divine!"

The judgments of JEHOVAH, as revealed in the Son of His love, are a great deep. "His greatness is unsearchable" (Psa. cxlv. 3). See how Isaiah sets forth the mysterious independence of JEHOVAH-JESUS and His Spirit: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing" (Isa. xl. 13, 14). In the contemplation of the purposes, promises, and performances of a covenant God in Christ for His people, the apostle Paul bursts forth in a flood of praise, as recorded in Rom. xi. 33—36: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

What wonderful grace and beauty appear in these black and bushy locks of Zion's Redeemer! God's people chosen to life, salvation, and glory before they had a being, except in the purpose of the Father. They were blessed in Christ before they experienced the curse in Adam. They were preserved from falling into hell before they fell in Eden, or felt a smart from their numerous wilderness failures. Chosen in the counsels of eternity, preserved in Christ through time, saved in Him with an everlasting salvation, are locks so bushy that carnal minds are blinded to their beauty, and human reason can only be embarrassed and entangled with their mysterious and majestic unfoldings. Precious locks! filled with the dewdrops of suretyship sorrow for sinful worms of the earth, we glory in them though earth and hell can do nought but rage and conspire against them. In the rich realization of this,

"When frowns appear to veil His face,  
And clouds surround His throne,  
He hides the purpose of His grace,  
To make it better known,"

we are taught to cry out with Job, "Lo, these are parts of His



ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him! but the thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job xxvi. 14). Blessed with the spiritual understanding of mysteries so deep and so Divine, we will conclude this morning's service by singing that precious hymn by Cowper, the Olney poet,

"God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.  
Deep in unfathomable mines,  
Of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.  
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.  
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.  
His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.  
Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain."

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## CHRIST'S EYES.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JULY 6TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His eyes are as the eyes of doves."—Song of Solomon v. 12.

**A**NOTHER particular of the beauties, excellencies, and glories of the Bridegroom of the heavenly bride will engage our attention this morning. A general view is given of Him in verse 10; but, as I told you before, generalising is not sufficient for the true-born child of God, neither will it satisfy the deep cravings for further revelations of the beauty and blessedness of the one Object of the Church's affections. He must be known as He is in Himself and for what He is in His adorable person, more than for His offices and performances. I do not wish to know what He has done, what He is doing, or what He purposes to do, but I desire to know HIMSELF in all these. "HIS OWN SELF" is the one Object of my faith, and hope, and love. The blessing of redemption I prize; but the person of the Redeemer is my delight. The gift of righteousness I highly esteem; but Christ my righteousness is beyond all esteem. The grace of justification I highly value; but Jesus my Justifier is my All-in-all. What I want fulfilled in my experience to-day may not satisfy me to-morrow; but I know I shall want Himself. It may be that the temptations of Satan, the weakness of the flesh, and the peculiar circumstances surrounding me will cause me to long for a different view of Him altogether to that in which He reveals Himself to me to-day. I may be bowed down under a sense of failure and weakness, and desire to know Him as my spiritual Samson. I may be left to feel my want of wisdom, and know it to my heart's discontent, and shall want Him near to me as my spiritual Solomon. I may feel my wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, and cry for Him to visit me as the good Physician in Gilead with His healing balm. I may experience the depths of

Satan's temptations, groan under his repeated assaults, and feel myself to be a poor accused wretch, with him close to my right hand (Zech. iii. 1). I shall then long for the protection of my covenant Angel, my powerful Pleader, my all-prevailing Advocate, who puts to silence every hellish accusation, and brings me into the presence of His Father, to stand in the light of His unsullied perfections, glorious as He is glorious, perfect as He is perfect, accepted and complete in Him. As I pass along the course of my strange, eventful, and ever-changing history, I sigh for fresh discoveries of the unchanging One: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8). He is ever the same in His person, attributes, offices, and promises to me, yet He is ever changing in the revelation of His goodness to me. In verse 11 we behold Him in His glorious Godhead, in His Headship over all things to His Church, and as the Head and Husband of His bride, in whom all spiritual blessings abound for her. We also see Him in His locks, which are bushy and black as a raven. In these are revealed His purposes of unchanging love, His promises, which are all Yea and Amen, and His performances for us and in us by the power of the Holy Ghost. All these are so great, vast, and glorious as to be utterly incomprehensible to poor human nature; and as to the child of God comprehending them in all their fulness, variety, and perfection, it is folly to think of it. Here and there he is privileged with a little unfolding of the glories of the Beloved, and now and then he is indulged with a sweet foretaste and blessed earnest of that perfect bliss and blessedness which will be his when, divested of the burden of the flesh, he shall see Him as He is, and worship Him as he ought. "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face-to-face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

Now notice the beauty of the order in which the bride, by the Holy Ghost, sets forth the superlative excellencies of her loving Bridegroom. She begins with His head, then describes His locks, and now speaks of His eyes as the eyes of doves. We will read the text:—

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves."

"*His eyes.*" In the first place this may mean His Spirit in the diversity of His gifts and operations. You will find that the Holy Ghost, in many portions of the Scriptures of truth, is called "*the Spirit of Christ.*" "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). If I have not the Spirit of Christ, I am none of His. If I have not the Spirit of Christ as my "indwelling God and Friend," I must give lamentable evidence that I am not a member of the body of Christ, and that I receive no nourishment, strength, or goodness from the Head, Husband, and All-in-all of His Church and people. The Spirit of the living God; the Spirit of our

Lord Jesus Christ; the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is He by whom we see, know, comprehend, and understand the varied perfections which dwell in Christ, the covenant blessings which are secured for us in Christ, the needful graces which flow to us *through* Christ, and the spiritual bounties which abound in us *by* Christ. Without the Spirit of Christ we have nothing, and are worse than nothing. I have been greatly interested of late with that precious portion in Heb. ix. 14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Mark those words — "*through the eternal Spirit.*" In many portions of the New Testament we are told that Christ's offering Himself was His own voluntary act. He says, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John x. 17, 18). Yet Paul by the Holy Ghost says, "*Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself to God.*" Everything done by our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth was by the grace and energy of the eternal Spirit. Did He take upon Himself to deliver His people, and abhor not the virgin's womb? It was according to the declaration of the angel to Mary as recorded in Luke i. 35: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Was He publicly set apart to perform His mediatorial offices as Prophet, Priest, and King? "And, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him" (Matt. iii. 16). This took place according to that which was prophesied concerning Him in Isa. lxi. 1, and quoted by Him in the synagogue of Nazareth, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Was He tempted in all points like unto His people? "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. iv. 1). The way was always up to the presence of the Father for His people, however dark, dreary, or downward it might seem to be. Did He preach God's Gospel? "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all" (Luke iv. 14). Did He cast out devils? It was by the Spirit of God (Matt. xii. 28). Did He offer Himself to God for the sins of His people? It was through the eternal Spirit (Heb. ix. 14). Did He rise again from the dead? It was according

to the Spirit of holiness (Romans i. 4). Did He ascend into heaven? It was to pour down the Spirit upon His people (Psalm lxxviii. 18). Now turn to Ephesians iv. 7: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints (the knitting together of the members of the one body) for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." There we see the diversity of gifts in the ministry, which displays the omnipresence of the Spirit and the omniscience of Christ. Now let me direct your attention to 1 Cor. xii. 4—11, where we have the Spirit set forth in the diversity of His gifts, ministrations, and operations. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." Wonderful capital has been made out of that last verse by Arminian perverters of God's truth. Oh, say they, every man upon earth has the manifestation of the Spirit given unto him. What an astounding error! contrary to the whole teaching of God's blessed Word. What does the portion say? "The manifestation of the Spirit"—or, the Spirit's manifestation; or, the manifestation of the possession of the Spirit—"is given to every man." Who are the persons the apostle is writing concerning in this chapter? The members of the body of Christ, every one of which shall be blessed with the manifestation of the Spirit. This shall be demonstrated by His grace and operation to whom He is given to profit withal. For who teacheth like Him? and when He teaches it must be to profit. "For to one is given the Spirit of wisdom." If you look at this in a ministerial light, you will see that to one minister is given wisdom to weigh well every portion of the Word, and to give it due prominence according to the proportion of faith. "To another is given the word of knowledge by the same Spirit." This man has a wonderful grasp of Divine truth, and as you sit at the feet of Jesus, listening to him, you wonder and rejoice in spirit as portion after portion is brought forth to substantiate the subject under consideration. "To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of

tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." Thus the Spirit in His gracious operations, manifestations, and ministrations in the members of the one body may be compared to the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ. But look at His gracious indwelling and operations as set forth in 1 Cor. ii. 10—11: "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit which is in Him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Every revelation we have of God's Christ, and every discovery of our corruption, depravity, necessity, and want, is by the gracious operations and inward searchings of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Turn to that portion which I read for our instruction and edification this morning, Psa. cxxxix. 7: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." Is it possible for me to make my bed in hell? Some rejoicing novices, who know nothing of the pains of hell, may say, "We have been delivered from all that." Ah, my dear friends, ye who groan beneath the weight of the body of death, know full well that your God has delivered, doth deliver, and must deliver you all your lives long. Dear old Jonah knew what it was from the belly of hell to roar out, "I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple" (chap. ii. 2—4). Let an elect vessel of mercy be lifted up to heaven, or cast down to hell, his God cannot leave him or forsake him. Turn with me to Isaiah xi. 2, where I wish you to notice the seven titles of JEHOVAH the Spirit as He rested upon Christ for His people. "And the SPIRIT OF THE LORD shall rest upon Him the SPIRIT OF WISDOM." Why of wisdom? Because of our ignorance and foolishness. If the SPIRIT OF WISDOM had not rested upon Christ for every member of His mystical body, they must have wandered in the mazes of error, ignorance, and folly down to the depths of eternal darkness and despair. But the Spirit of wisdom rests upon Christ, and all the wisdom I experience or possess is by the grace and power of the Spirit of Christ in me. "The SPIRIT OF UNDERSTANDING." This is a gracious covenant provision, for, with all the wisdom God has bestowed upon me I oftentimes lack a true apprehension of His mind and will as revealed in His written Word. But here is the blessed truth: All the understanding necessary for

me to possess is in Christ and shall be communicated to me in God's own appointed time. Here I rejoice in the blessed assurance of the fulfilment of that precious promise of the Master, "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth is come, *He will guide you into all truth*"—that is, He shall guide you into the understanding and experience of all essential truth. "The SPIRIT OF COUNSEL." We seek counsel from one another and smart for our folly; but, depend upon it, the best Counsellor is the Lord Jesus Christ, by the grace of His Spirit. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel," was the declaration of Asaph (Psa. lxxiii. 24). "I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel," was the ascription of grateful praise ascending from the heart of the Psalmist (Psa. xvi. 7). "The SPIRIT OF MIGHT." This is blessedly suitable to those who have no might and to whom He increases strength. I have no might in myself. All my might is in my Head, from whom I am strengthened with all *necessary* might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness (Col. i. 11). "The SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE." Oh how short-sighted we are. How little we know of our adorable Head and Husband, His mind, His will, His love, His faithfulness, and His covenant. But it is of God's mercy, as assuredly as we have been brought into living oneness with Him, we know just as much as He intends us to know, and we are brought into the experimental enjoyment of all the knowledge treasured up for us in Him from before all worlds. "The SPIRIT OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD." Not the spirit of cowardice or fearfulness, "for God hath not given us the Spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. i. 7). We are blessed with a Spirit of filial fear in the presence of our gracious Father and covenant God in Christ. In these seven titles or attributes of the Spirit we learn something of the fulness of Divine provision the Church possesses in Christ. The book of Revelation (iii. 1) describes Christ saying to the angel of the Church in Sardis, "These things, saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works." Again, in chap. v. 6 John says, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Here again we see the perfection, communication, ministration, communion, comfort, and consolation abounding in Christ the Head to His body the Church.

"*His eyes.*" Wherever this expression occurs in God's blessed Book it denotes the perfect knowledge or omniscience of Christ. See how clearly this is set forth in Psa. cxxxix. 1—6: "O LORD, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying-

down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue but, lo, O LORD, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." I well remember when I was a youngster learning Prov. xv. 3: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." And this teaches me that it is wise to have the written Word stored up in the memories of our young folk, for these words had an influence over my young mind, my ways, and my words, wherever I went. When I was at church, the eyes of the Lord were there. When I went to the theatre, the eyes of the Lord were there. Some of you may exclaim, What, did you go to such a place in the face of such a searching portion as that being treasured up in your memory? Yes, I did; and, were it not for the restraining power of Divine grace, I should go again, old as I am. Mine is an incorrigible nature, and you may rest assured if I were left to myself there would be nothing too bad for me to do, and nothing too vile for me to see. But here you have the truth: I never was in a theatre yet but I had the solemn conviction that, dying there, down to the depths of eternal damnation I should go. The eyes of my Lord were there, searching, trying, testing, proving the wills and the ways of His poor wayward child, and teaching him that without Him I nothing good could do. "The eyes of the LORD are in every place" is a statement calculated to frighten and terrify the moral, or merely religious, man; but religion in itself will not satisfy the living child of God. Wherever the word "*religion*" occurs in the pages of inspiration, a word of qualification is always found before it. Religion in itself is the veriest rubbish to a tried and tempted child of God; but

" True religion's more than notion,  
Something must be known and felt."

The man who has nothing but religion to stand by him in the hour of trial, however clear that religion may be, however excellent it may be, when the eyes of the Christ of God are set upon him, he must be filled with terror and confusion. For me to behold the Lord Jesus Christ with the Spirit's revelation of Him in me as my Brother, Lover, Husband, and Saviour, can only cause me to cry, "Let not Thy terror make me afraid."

"*His eyes.*" Daniel says: "His eyes are as lamps of fire" (Dan. x. 6). John says: "His eyes were as a flame of fire" (Rev. i. 14). These were, and are, all-revealing. They discovered the depths of Daniel's weakness and corruption, while they laid John low, even as dead, at the feet of the great King-Priest. Even now they pierce down to the very depths of deceit, sin, and hypocrisy, and bring to light the hidden things of darkness abounding in this vile nature of mine. Mark you,



human nature in this pulpit is not one particle better than that of the vilest wretch in all creation. But here is a blessed fact. He, whose eyes appeared to John as flames of fire, was "like unto the Son of Man." It was He who was once the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," whose loving heart was broken with reproach, and whose lovely eyes were often filled with sympathising tears. This was the Man who, through temptations, trials, and sorrows before unknown, identified Himself with His poor pilgrim people throughout all their lifetime of trial in the wilderness, and now meets with them in their seasons of want and necessity, sweetly sympathises with them in their sorrows, and soothes their spirits in times of perplexity and distress. His loving eyes are ever over them for good. He fails not to notice the oppression of the nature He has implanted in the hearts of His people. See how blessedly He states this to Moses in Exod. iii. 7, 8: "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." He is always ready to bless them with a helping hand, but even that seems to be derogatory to the character of Zion's Beloved, for His hand not only helps but performs all things for His weak and weary ones. His omniscience guides, His omnipotence guards. There is not a want, sorrow, care, or anxiety of His people but He sees all about it, and has given them His faithful promise to see to it with His supplies of covenant provision. All that I want is found in Him. All that I can need is graciously communicated by Him. All that I can ask for He is ready to give, ay, and more, according to the declaration of the apostle in Eph. iii. 20: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

"*His eyes.*" To whom are they directed? Turn to Psa. xxxiii. 18, 19: "Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." There must be something cheering and comforting in this precious declaration to some of you tempted and tried ones. Mark you, it does not say, "The eye of the Lord is upon them" that are very circumspect, or those who are believing, obedient and faithful; but "upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy." It does not even say, upon those who experience and enjoy His mercy, but those who are only raised to a hope in it. *To deliver their soul from death.* Do you know and mourn over the feeling of spiritual death? Can you say with the apostle Paul, "I die daily" (1 Cor. xv. 31)? "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Cor. i. 9), "Death worketh in us" (2 Cor. iv. 12). Yes, indeed you can, and you know something of His delivering grace. You come up to this spot,

where He has often looked upon you, and visited you, hungering and thirsting after Him who is your only righteousness, but He sometimes seems to heed you not, yet His resources of grace are such that He keeps you alive though you experience a famine in your souls. There is another precious testimony in Psa. xxxiv. 15: "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." Who are the righteous? His own elect and eternally loved members whom He has seen righteous in His righteousness, perfect in His perfections, complete in Him, His Church, His bride.

"Thus in His eyes she ever stood,  
From wrinkle and from blemish free;  
Loved with the dateless love of God,  
And blest by the Great Sacred Three."

Turn now to 2 Chron. xvi. 9: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." I here anticipate the doubts, fears, and objections of some of you who are ready to say, "If I had a perfect heart my faith would be strong, my hope would be firm, and my love to Him unabating. How can the Lord have respect to me?" Well, my dear friend, you may cheer up a little here, for the eyes of the LORD are over you for good. He is ever watching over you when you are writing bitter things against yourself, and bringing yourself to the conclusion that you have no part or lot in His salvation. His eyes are always on the look out for those predestinated opportunities in which He reveals the love of His heart and the blessings of His kingdom.

"Israel, a name Divinely blest,  
May rise secure, securely rest;  
Thy holy Guardian's watchful eyes  
Admit no slumber nor surprise."

"*His eyes.*" Now look at that precious account of the healing of the man sick of the palsy, in Matt. ix. 2—7. "And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed." How did that man come to Jesus? Not after the fashion described and demanded by fleshly freewill taskmasters. He did not come running, walking, or creeping. Of himself he could not come at all. Yet he did come. Here you have it: "And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed." He was carried. Did Jesus notice him? Yes! "*And Jesus seeing their faith* said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." It does not say He saw the faith of the sick of the palsy, but that of those who brought him. He owned him as a son, gave him sweet encouragement, the assurance of sins forgiven, and restoration of health to his body. We will now notice effects of a different nature produced by a loving look from the eyes of an affectionate

Master. You will find the narrative in Luke xxii. 61, 62. Peter, after many promises and protestations to the contrary, fails foully in his discipleship. My dear friends, do not be in a hurry in promising what you will do for the Lord, for His servants, or for His cause. It may be before you can perform your promise He may visit you with reverses in providence, blight your hopes, and wither your expectations so that you cannot do the things that you would. If you feel you have something to do, do it quickly, but make no promises. Peter was profuse in his promises and failed. Instead of standing by the Lord he followed Him afar off. "A certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. Another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. *And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.* And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." The Lord's look to Peter was one of loving remembrance, and you may depend upon it, His looks to His weak and wandering disciples are all, and always in love. But sometimes His looks appear to be in any direction but that of His weary, wandering followers, yet at the very time He is watching and waiting for the set time of favour to cheer and comfort them.

"When Thy statutes I forsake,  
When my graces dimly shine;  
When my covenant I break,  
Jesus, then remember Thine,—  
Check my wanderings  
By a look of love Divine."

The eyes of the Lord God of Israel are always upon the land which He cares for from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year (Deut. xi. 12). Upon every heart which He has sanctified for Himself, and in which He has put His name for ever, His eyes and His heart shall be perpetually (1 Kings ix. 3).

"*His eyes are as the eyes of doves.*" This metaphor is to direct our attention to the true nature of Christ's love to His people. The dove is remarkable for its gentleness, constancy, fidelity, and chastity. So is the loving Bridegroom in every look of His eyes to His bride, the Church. He guides His wandering ones in the wilderness with His eye (Psa. xxxii. 8). He guards and defends His chased ones with His look (Exod. xiv. 24). To His oppressed ones in captivity His looks of gentleness and fond affection are their safety and security, and pledges of their subsequent deliverance. When delivered, they may wander

from Him who loves them with an everlasting love, but this will not affect the constancy and fidelity of His love. They may seek to flee from His presence, like Jonah, but He will allure them with His eyes to look and look again towards His holy temple up yonder, and teach them that they shall never lack a look from Him whose looks preserve them from destruction, and keep them alive in destitution. Constancy and fidelity are only seen truly in Him.

"Zion's Friend in nothing alters,  
Though all others may and do ;  
His is love that never falters,  
Always to its object true :  
Happy Zion,  
Crowned with mercies ever new."

We not only see gentleness, constancy and fidelity in the dove, but chastity also. Search through natural history and tell me, if you can, of any creature so much attached to its mate, or one that mourns its loss so much as this. The dove, more than all other creatures, loves to feast its eyes on the one object of its affection. In this we see the chastity and purity of Christ's love to His people, His Church, His bride, His dove, whom He loves to meet in the clefts of the Rock, in the secret places of the stairs, and to whom He says, "Let me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song ii. 14). As He thus looks upon me, speaking to my heart His words of spirit and life, He imparts His own sweet simplicity, causing me to enjoy His meekness and gentleness, and to manifest that chastity which I have in Him, and by which alone I am presented as a chaste one to my Lover and Husband, in whom alone I can confide, in whose arms of love I delight to be embraced, and upon whose bosom of everlasting love I long to lay my weary head when all its cares and anxieties are drawing to a close.

"*His eyes.*" As a merciful and faithful High Priest He is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart of His people. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight : but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 12, 13). Up to His Father He lifts His eyes in His work of all-prevalent intercession for His elect and redeemed people (John xvii. 1), and as He casts His eyes round about upon those who sit at His sacred feet, He says, "Behold My mother and My brethren !" (Mark iii. 34). This is the King that sitteth in the throne of judgment, scattering away all evil with His eyes (Prov. xx. 8). He is of purer eyes than to behold evil in His bride and not remove it from her, so that when evil is charged against her by the world, the flesh, and the devil, He looks, and all evil is scattered, and she appears all glorious in His loving and complacent view.

"*His eyes are as doves' eyes.*" The time is gone. God helping us, on a future occasion we will look at a few of the rivers of

waters by which God's doves delight to dwell, and by which the eyes of Christ love to linger.

May He add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

"MY BELOVED."

LONE let me live with Thee, my Lord,  
And feast for evermore  
On the rich banquet of Thy Word—  
Mine by Thy Spirit's power.

Come ! in a bright and glorious haze,  
And bring Thy Person near ;  
While the fond Holy Ghost conveys  
The love that calms all fear.

Come ! with a blaze of heavenly light,  
As oft I've seen Thee come :  
A diamond Image, pure and white,  
Girt with the noonday sun.

Come ! with Thine hand uplift to bless,  
And swear, " My son, I'm thine ; "  
Then let my lip in homage press  
Thy fingers all Divine.

Oft have I kiss'd that hand so fair,  
Oft in return been blest—  
Lain at Thy feet, Thou ever dear,  
And entered into rest.

Spoilt by Thy smile for all the world,  
E'en saints but weary me ;  
Love's banner o'er my soul unfurled,  
Bids me have none but Thee.

My sole Delight. my only Good—  
My Husband, Lover, Friend ;  
Clad with Thy glory, life, and blood,  
When will my rapture end ?

" When Self-Existence fails to be,"  
Methinks I hear Thee say :  
" My joy is thine eternally—  
Thine My eternal day."

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S FULNESS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JULY 27TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set."—Song of Solomon v. 12.

IT has been our lot and privilege to meditate a little upon the personal glories and excellencies of God's Christ, the Church's Bridegroom, as displayed in the preceding context. In dwelling upon the beauties of His person we are liable to be subjected to the taunting inquiry of the proud professor and self-sufficient pietist, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" If our hearts have been warmed with a sense and realisation of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and the eyes of our spiritual understanding have been ravished with the sight of the beauties of His adorable person, if we have found in Him the only object for our spiritual admiration and the sole source of our comfort and edification, our confession will be that of Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa. lxxiii. 25). There are many objects upon which our eyes rest with *some* satisfaction, there are others upon which our hearts linger with *some* gratification; but if our eyes and hearts have been set and fixed upon Him,

"Here we would sit and gaze away  
A long and everlasting day."

The world may count us strange, and mere religionists may pronounce us mad; but if love to Christ be madness, Lord, increase our madness. If our speech be considered peculiar because of the prevailing power of the name of Christ, Lord, increase our peculiarity. May the longing of our souls ever be, Lord, cause us to feast our eyes and gratify our hearts with those things alone which are pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight. Into whatso-

ever company we enter, may Thy truth and Thy glory be paramount, and may our adoring confession be, with the bride, "*My Beloved is white and ruddy, the Chiefest among ten thousand.*" In these words we see the purity of His person and the perfection of His atonement. "*His head is as the most fine gold.*" In this metaphor we see revealed His dominion, majesty, and sovereignty over all things, in the understanding and experience of which we can sing,—

"Keep silence, all created things,  
And wait your Maker's nod ;  
My soul stands trembling while she sings  
The honours of her God.  
  
Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,  
Hang on His firm decree ;  
He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave TO BE."

We delight not in Divine sovereignty as an abstract theory, but as a glorious reality, even the sovereignty of His grace in our hearts, governing our affections, reigning over our rebellious wills and imperious lusts, and causing our seeming reverses to work together for our good. Yes, He reigns over all things for us, "manages our mean affairs," and teaches us that, in the face of all our deadness, darkness, and desolation, we are just as near and dear to Him as He is to the Father. "*His locks are bushy and black as the raven.*" Eternal youth belongs to our most glorious Christ. All the thoughts of His heart, all the purposes of His covenant, and all the promises of His Word in which He is pleased to reveal Himself, are unchanging and unchangeable. His locks are dark and mysterious as the raven's movements. His thoughts are a great deep, and in the contemplation of them we exclaim with Paul, "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi. 33).

Three weeks ago to-day we noticed the first part of this morning's text,—

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set," or, "*sitting in fulness.*"

"His eyes" denote His omniscience ; His perfect knowledge of His people and all that concerns them ; His watching over them in all their anxieties, cares, and perplexities ; His sympathy with them in all their sufferings and sorrows ; His compassion for them in all their temptations, trials, and tribulations. "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" (Job xxxiv. 21, 22). "His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chron. xvi. 9). To show Himself strong because His people are weak indeed in the experience of those

trying scenes through which He in His predestined providence is leading them. "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. xv. 3). But in no place do we see this set forth so clearly and fully as in Hebrews iv. 12—16: "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints, and marrow, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." What are the thoughts and intents of our heart this morning? I do not say, *our hearts*, but "our heart;" for I address myself to the members of the one body, to the lambs and sheep of Christ's flock. The desire of my heart in the ministrations of God's house and the declaration of His truth, is to feed, instruct, refresh, and encourage the flock, and leave all others to be searched, sifted, and scattered by the hand of my God. But what are the thoughts and intents of our hearts? Mine, at this moment, are wholly of Him and His, for His Father's glory, His exaltation, the honour of His Spirit, and the good of His Church. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." All things in heaven, earth, hell, and infinite space are lying bare before the eyes of our Head and Husband. "Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." For a little while we will notice the expression,

"*Rivers of waters.*" The Holy Ghost by Solomon declares that the eyes of our Beloved, which are not fierce and furious, but lovely and loving, are by the rivers of waters. The word "*water*" in God's most Holy Word has a variety of meanings. Sometimes it refers to God's goings forth in grace for the salvation of His people (Psalm xli. 4), and at other times to His goings forth in judgment upon His enemies. Sometimes it illustrates the onward course of a triumphing and devastating army, while, at others, it shows forth the irresistible force of the love of God in Christ Jesus, as we see in 2 Cor. v. 14: "For the love of Christ constraineth us." Borne along as upon the bosom of an irresistible current. Kelly beautifully expresses this in this sweet verse,—

"When the foe desired to have me,  
Jesus said, 'This sheep is Mine,'  
And resigned His life to save me.  
Jesus! what a love is Thine!  
All victorious is its course,  
Nothing can withstand its force."

Sometimes it sets forth power and triumph of God's truth, the



onward progress of the everlasting Gospel unfolding and revealing the covenant care, kindness, and concern of JEHOVAH over His people in Christ Jesus (Ezekiel xlvii. 1—12). Ascriptions of praise flowing from the hearts of the redeemed throng upon Mount Sion are likened to the voice of many waters (Rev. xiv. 2). The aboundings of griefs and sorrows are described under this figure in Psalm cxix. 136: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law." The Holy Ghost in His gracious works, as seen flowing from hearts of true believers, is thus set forth in John vii. 38: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The peace of God which passeth all understanding keeping the hearts and minds of His people, is compared to the gentle flow of a river in Isaiah lxvi. 12. Afflictions and sorrows abounding to the people of God are thus portrayed: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee" (Isaiah xliii. 2). When we are led to consider the words, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters," we are sweetly forced to seek hidden streams of love, life, and salvation which God has designed for our instruction and edification. May the blessed Spirit guide us, and bless us with precious unfoldings of covenant consolations.

"*Rivers of waters.*" Truth, as it flows from the throne of God, forms a river of perplexing pains and pleasures. This is experienced by that people whom He prepares and presents as an acceptable offering to Himself. Turn to Isa. xviii. 7: "In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, *whose land the rivers have spoiled*, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion." Here we have a river spoiling in its effects. Truth flowing forth by the irresistible power of God the ever-blessed Spirit, spoils all the fair beauty of nature's productions. When the convicting power of the Spirit of truth is felt, away goes all sense of creature righteousness. Look at the Saviour's testimony concerning this in John xvi. 8—12: "And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me." Now tell me, what was the first impressions of God's truth upon your mind? What were your first spiritual thoughts of God? Surely not as your Father, Friend, Provider, and Protector. No. He was revealed in the purity and perfections of His law as an angry Judge, demanding and condemning. Solomon says, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxvii. 19). When I first came to see myself in the pure, crystal water of Divine truth, in the clear shinings of the purity and perfections of that God against whom I had so grievously sinned, I could say nothing but, "Behold I

am vile, unclean, unclean." Then I heard His voice declare, "The soul that sinneth it shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 4), and, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10). His judgment concerning me seemed to be, "Depart thou cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). Here He taught me to judge my thoughts according to His thoughts of infinite purity, and I found them to be more like those of a devil than those of a God. He brought me to judge of my feelings, when I discovered them to be those of a beast compared with His. He gave me to judge myself in the light of His glorious perfections, and I could feel myself to be fit fuel for hell, and to seek association with Him would only be to court my own destruction. Thus I knew and felt myself to be a scattered and peeled sinner, one whom the rivers of Divine truth and justice had spoiled to all sense and sight of creature righteousness and beauty. But the truth of our text was made exceeding precious here. His eyes as the eyes of doves were by this spoiling river, and will be in the case of every elect and blood-bought sinner. It matters not how much such may be spoiled, what devastation and desolation they may experience through the application of JEHOVAH'S righteous law, or, what loss through the rivers of Divine conviction, a precious Saviour is looking on, not with eyes of fire and flame to burn and scorch His loved one, but with eyes of tenderest love and compassion, a heart near to bless, and a hand ready to save. Hence He proceeds to say, "Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." He had obeyed every jot and tittle of His Father's law. He gave Himself a sacrifice for the sins of His people. He entered heaven's highest glory for them. He sends His blessed Spirit to quicken and convince them of their sin and of His righteousness, and in the deep waters of soul trouble watches over them with His eyes of faithful love and fond affection.

"*Rivers of waters.*" Look again at the portion I quoted from Psa. cxix. 136: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes." This is the true state of a child of God when first brought to know itself in living oneness with Him. Sin, wherever it appears, is exceeding sinful. The cry of the pietist may be heard on every hand, "*Sin rolls down our streets like a mighty torrent*;" but the convinced sinner mourns and cries because of the aboundings of sin and iniquity in his soul's experience day by day. Here I am. I look within for holiness, but impurity appears at every turn. I seek for comeliness, but every hateful monster meets my gaze. I sigh for the company of heaven's best Beloved, but devils and foul spirits harass and buffet me. I long to breathe the air of purity and love, but the stench of corruption and enmity meets me on every hand. I look around me and in religious matters I see error abounding, while in secular things profanity and profligacy reign rampant. Sin appears in high

places and open depravity in low places; and go where I may, apart from spiritual communion with a precious Christ, nothing but sin and iniquity meets my gaze, while rivers of waters run down mine eyes. Ah, my dear friends, a child of God who knows what it is to enter into the presence chamber of his God will take good care that neither saint nor sinner shall disturb the sacred and solemn communings of that hallowed spot. He loves, with spiritual chastity and godly jealousy, to hold sweet intercourse with the one Object of his heart's affections, unseen and unheard by all else but Him. It is here that the experience of Jeremiah is freely disclosed, "Oh that my head was waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of My people" (Jer. ix. 1). What is your experience in the presence of the Majesty of heaven? Is it not attended with feelings and emotions not to be cast before dogs and swine, and not to be displayed in the presence of the fleshly religious multitude? You know it is. As the chastened spirit bows in the solemn silence of the Divine presence, let but a tread be heard, the communion is interrupted, and the saint appears to be in no praying mood. The true worshipper in spirit and in secret will not have the world, no, not even the nearest and dearest upon earth to hear what passes between itself and the God of all grace. I am sure that I do speak to those who know what refreshing tears of God's own giving are. Let me ask you. When you are prostrate in true humility before your God and those who are so near and dear to you are brought to your remembrance, the wife of your bosom, the husband of your affections, the children, offsprings of your body, who give no evidence of union to Him in whom alone everlasting life is enjoyed, and bear no marks of oneness with Him through whom escape from everlasting death is experienced, what are your thoughts then? When your redeemed spirit quivers with hope in the presence of your God, and your heart fails at the remembrance of the folly, sin, and shame of those who are your own flesh and blood, where are you, and what are you? Ah, my friends, you are melted into nothingness at the thought of God's great mercy to you, who are so undeserving, and with hope for the erring, the wayward, and the dead in sins, while *rivers of waters run down your eyes*. Well, ay, and it is well, look up, for as assuredly as the Holy Ghost directs your downcast eyes to the hills of everlasting love and mercy where your covenant Head appears for you, you shall know the precious truth that His eyes are by those rivers of waters which run down your eyes. Tears of God's own giving are never shed in vain. Cheer up, poor weeper, it may be when thy head has ceased its aching and lies beneath the clods of the earth, when thy tongue has ceased its stammering, and thine eyes are for ever closed in death, those who in thy lifetime cared not for thy God and scouted thy religion, may rise up to call thee blessed. In the

very spot where thou hast yearned with anxiety over them, and where thy God has showed to thee marvellous and surprising grace, there they may be heard blessing and praising God for the experience of that precious truth recorded in Exod. xv. 2, "MY FATHER'S GOD."

"*Rivers of waters.*" Turn to Isa. xxxii. 2: "And a Man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; *as rivers of water in a dry place*, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Now look at chap xli. 17, which is a very blessed portion to me: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none." Know ye anything of that experience? Some of you have come seeking for a draught of the water of life, love, and salvation as it flows in the sanctuary for the comfort and consolation of weary souls; but you are destined to disappointment. You seek, but find not. You ask, but receive no answer. "And their tongue faileth for thirst." The tongue which has expressed want, desire, and expectation fails to utter a single word. "I the LORD will hear them." God will hear the desire of those who are ready to perish when not a word is spoken. When "we know not what we should pray for as we ought, and the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26)—a prayer-inditing, will prove Himself a prayer-answering, God. This is sweetly expressed in that precious verse which has found its way to some of our hearts,—

"And if in lonely places  
A fearful child, I shrink,  
He prays the prayer within me  
I cannot ask or think.  
The deep unspoken language,  
Known only to that love,  
Which fathoms this heart's mystery  
From the throne of light above."

He knows the prayer I cannot pray, He knows the words I cannot speak, He knows the desires I cannot express, He knows the necessities I cannot utter; and He says, "I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them; I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." This sets forth the pure, refreshing streams of grace which flow forth in the proclamation of God's glorious Gospel, even the waters of the Sanctuary. What is the Sanctuary? A place erected of bricks and mortar, paint and plaster, like this? Well, sometimes God is pleased to make this place a sanctuary to His people. But I like that which we find in Ezekiel xi. 16: "Thus saith the Lord God: Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little Sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." If He has

made Himself so to you, He will cause the waters of life, love, and salvation to flow unto you, causing your souls to delight in that refreshment and encouragement which come from Him alone.

*"Rivers of waters."* The river of eternal love and life. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God" (Psalm xlv. 4). Wherever the waters of this river come, life, health, and fruitfulness abound (Ezekiel xlvii. 1—12). All who drink of them are blessed with the knowledge of hell's overthrow, death's destruction, sin put away by the sacrifice of the Surety, and Satan thwarted in all his designs against the people of God. Have you enjoyed but one draught from this river of water of life? See! You shall live eternally, for the testimony of the Master to the poor harlot of Samaria is, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). With the sweet enjoyment of this we may well sing—

"Oh! Christ He is the Fountain.  
The deep sweet well of love!  
The streams on earth I've tasted,  
More deep I'll drink above:  
There to an ocean fullness,  
His mercy doth expand,  
And glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land."

The spiritual understanding and experimental realisation of these glorious truths fill the heart with joy unspeakable and full of glory. These are waters of encouragement to the feelingly forsaken pilgrim; waters of refreshment to the fainting and failing traveller to Zion; waters of consolation to the poor and needy. It is by them that thy Saviour-God cheers thee with His gracious promises, when afflictions and sorrows await thee. "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee*" (Isa. xliii. 1, 2). As assuredly as the waters of life have come to you with their life-giving and reviving power, you shall sing with your Lord in glory and know what that means, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 17). We now come to notice the words,

*"Washed with milk."* This may have reference to the eyes, or to the doves. In whatever light we contemplate them a fund of Divine instruction and consolation is sure to be found therein. The Beloved is pleased to look upon His bride in union with Himself, and behold the various members of His body as pure, fair, and comely as milk-white doves in His presence. As is the medium through which JEHOVAH beholds, so are the objects

beheld. As the God of infinite purity looks upon His own in Christ Jesus, He sees them washed, pure, clean, and white. As the beloved Bridegroom looks with love's own thrilling gaze upon His bride in the glass of His Father's decrees, nestling in His bosom of everlasting love, sitting at His sacred feet, and receiving from Him those blessings, bounties, and benefits which abound by Him alone, He sees her pure as He is pure. The milk-white dove of Christ loves pure provision. The dove will fly long distances for pure water, and those in experimental oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ love the pure water of the Gospel without any mixture of error. This is blessedly set forth in the words of dear old John Kent:—

"We plead Thy promise made;  
'Tis from conditions free:  
In bonds of everlasting love,  
I'll be a God to thee.  
  
'Tis like a living spring  
Of waters, sweet and clear;  
There's not an 'if' to foul the stream,  
Or 'peradventure' here.  
  
Free in the Fountain-Head,  
The source from whence it came:  
In 'wills' and 'shalls' of Gospel grace,  
Eternally the same."

He further describes this pure water clear as crystal which flows from the covenant settlements of eternity, thus:—

"Beneath the sacred throne of God  
I saw a river rise;  
The streams were peace and pard'ning blood  
Descending from the skies.  
  
Angelic minds cannot explore  
This deep, unfathom'd sea;  
'Tis void of bottom, brim, or shore,  
And lost in Deity."

Yes, doves will fly long distances with longings and desires painfully experienced to feed upon clean provision, but will not notice the carrion and offal which satisfy the unclean raven and vulture. So the living children of God, who have experienced the inflowing of the river of Divine life and love, will not hesitate to walk or ride long distances for the clean provision of the everlasting covenant, pure corn from heaven's garner, unadulterated food from God's own hands. The dove is characterised by its gentleness and meekness, so those who are brought into living union with a precious Christ, and have felt the love of God shed abroad in their heart by the Holy Ghost given unto them, are blessed with the mind, meekness, and gentleness of Christ (2 Cor. x. 1; Phil. ii. 1—5). Such are privileged to say: "We love Him because He first loved us," and, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John iii. 14, iv. 19). I know there are some here

this morning who can rise so high as that, and perhaps cannot get one hair's breadth higher, yet you may consider it a marvellous mercy if you have been brought to love any poor sinners because of the image and spirit of the Master seen in them. Oh, the blessedness of knowing that I am a milk-white dove washed in the blood of the Lamb. Because of His eyes of love which looked upon me when I was in my sin and pollution (Ezek. xvi. 6—8), I am declared to be exceeding beautiful, ay, perfectly beautiful, through the comeliness of my God and Saviour which He has put upon me. Look at these precious declarations: "Free from sin" (Rom. vi. 22); "justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 39); "perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. i. 28); "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6); "complete in Him" (Col. ii. 10). Yet God's doves are remarkable for their mourning (Isa. lix. 11; Ezek. vii. 16). Though washed and justified, they are a mourning and confessing people. They cry with Job, "Behold, I am vile" (Job xl. 4). They sigh with the bride, "I am black" (Song i. 5). They confess with Isaiah, "I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa. vi. 5). They acknowledge with Paul, "I am the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). But, with all this, the beloved Bridegroom will speak His own precious truth home to the soul, "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee" (Song iv. 7). I love that word, "*in thee.*" It is not only, "there is no spot *on* thee" through imputation, but "there is no spot *in* thee" through imputation. The Divine nature, the incorruptible seed, the new man, is like God Himself, and cannot sin because it is wholly of Himself.

"*And fitly set.*" Look at the margin, and you will read, "*sitting in fulness;*" or, "*fitly placed and set as a precious stone in the foil of a ring.*" This means that the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ, or His knowledge of His people is perfect. The heavenly Bridegroom is omniscient. His eyes glare and stare not, like those of a fool. His eyes are not sunken, like those of a betrayer. They are fitly set, or sitting in fulness, which means, they are perfect and complete, turning not aside from His people, but looking straight forward and beholding them perfect and complete in Him in spite of all their failures and falls. In the fulness of grace and glory of JEHOVAH'S everlasting covenant the eyes of Christ are fitly set. In all His dealings with His people He is ever mindful, and always has respect to the covenant (Psa. lxxiv. 20, cxi. 5). Let us dwell upon those precious words:

"*Sitting in fulness.*" What fulness is this? I delight to sing with heart and voice:

"All fulness resides in Jesus our Head,  
And ever abides to answer our need;  
The Father's good pleasure hath laid up in store  
A plentiful treasure to give to the poor."

Turn to that glorious ascension Psalm, the 24th. I love to look

at the order in which the Psalms have been placed by the Holy Ghost. In the 22nd we see Christ in redemption; in the 23rd, in resurrection; in the 24th, in ascension. Here He enters heaven's highest glory to possess all things for His people, and makes a way to their hearts with the blessings He holds for them. Read the first verse: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Is it? I think I feel the flutterings of some downcast hearts before me this morning, in which dreary surmising abound. The Lord's earth is full of the Lord's treasures; but you are poor, needy, destitute. You have reckoned up matters, and you know not how to face those who may be making demands upon you. Fears abound that you may not be able to put sufficient upon your table for the sustenance of those so near and dear to you. I know what I am talking about, and that this is the lot of many a poor child of God. Yet cheer up, my friend, it is a glorious truth, that, "The earth is the LORD'S and the fulness thereof." Its teeming minerals produced by the ingenuity of man, its prolific vegetation brought forth by the sun, and its cattle upon a thousand hills, are all the Lord's for the supply of His people's need. Men mourn, sigh, and rebel against the God of heaven because of the weather, as though He knows not how many showers of rain to send without consulting them. I know it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to see the sun, but it is far more pleasant when the Sun of Righteousness shines in the heart. Then the empty house and the empty sinner, filled with the love of God, resound with songs of gratitude to Him. As I roam amid the broad lands and beautiful estates of the nobility, it is mine to lift my heart in true humility, without grudging the great one his greatness, or the noble his nobility, and say, "My Father made them all." That is a precious declaration of the apostle's: "All things are yours." "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand" (John iii. 35), who bestows all covenant blessings with a liberal, loving, and bountiful heart. His eyes of affection and compassion are by the rivers of waters, wherever His love and life flow, wherever godly sorrow and spiritual necessity are experienced and breathed out of an exercised heart to Him, and to Him alone.

"*Sitting in fulness.*" Turn with me to that marvellous declaration in Eph. i. 22, 23: "And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, *the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*" In the fulness of His love, He is gazing upon His Church, which is His fulness. Yes, His eye of love is ever upon the members of His body as they are scattered here and there in this sinful world. Oh, my poor tried and tempted brother, my perplexed and harassed sister, you who are now experiencing fellowship with a precious Christ in His sufferings, it may be in the depths of desertion, the path of persecution, or the furnace



of affliction, whatever be the sorrow of thy spirit, it will prove to be the foretaste of the consolations of thy God. All the fulness of covenant love must be enjoyed by the bride, the Church. Look at that declaration of the Baptist in John i. 16: "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Here the eyes of JEHOVAH-JESUS see the fulness of His mediatorial grace and glory received by His poor and needy people. It matters not what may be the designs of Satan, or the sins and infirmities of the recipients of His fulness, sovereign grace over all will abound, and He

"Will follow with the eye of love  
The little flock for which He died."

Having saved, He will pardon and justify from all sin; having justified, He will cleanse from all iniquity; having cleansed, He will breathe His sweet peace in the heart; having breathed His peace, He will bring His loved ones home to glory.

It is a blessed privilege to possess a discerning eye and an understanding heart in these glorious realities, and a discriminating judgment to distinguish between the precious and the vile. Thus blessed, we shall rejoice in the truths of God dealt out to us by Him. No sight will truly gratify, and no beauty will fully satisfy, the eyes of precious faith and fond affection but the sight and beauty of Him who is white and ruddy, the Chiefest among ten thousand, whose dove-like eyes can never dart condemnation or death to the loved ones of His heart.

May the Lord add His blessing for His own name's sake.  
Amen.

#### H Y M N.

JESUS saw His Church elected,  
And betroth'd her as His own;  
She shall never be rejected,  
But be partner of His throne;  
How He lov'd her!  
Long ere time or sin were known.

Jesus saw His Church when falling  
Into ruin and disgrace:  
When her state was most appalling,  
Stood as Surety in her place:  
How He lov'd her!  
Thus to magnify His grace.

Jesus saw His Church enslaved,  
In her guilt and far from God;  
But, resolv'd she should be saved,  
Interpos'd His precious blood.  
How He lov'd her!  
Thus to suffer for her good.

Jesus saw His Church when straying,  
Brought her back by sov'reign grace;  
Now He sees her watching, praying,  
Waiting to behold His face:  
Still He loves her!  
And in heaven prepares her place.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S CHEEKS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
AUGUST 3RD, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers."—Song of Solomon v. 13.

**I**N true and perfect order, and by the grace and guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ describes His rare beauties and varied excellencies. She particularizes the various features, and describes distinctly the beauties brought to light by Him who delights to glorify the Father's Christ, and to bear witness concerning Him (John xvi. 13—15).

It has been our privilege to contemplate the Headship of Christ, and to glory in His Godhead, Majesty, and Sovereignty, while our hearts rejoice to behold Him as the source of all heavenly wisdom and power to the members of His one body. We have admired His black and bushy locks, in which were revealed His gracious purposes, precious promises, loving thoughts, and perfect performances for His people. We have looked into His eyes of affection and seen them ever watching over the objects of His everlasting love. They were ever over them for good, and on the look out as it were for opportunities to display that fulness of grace and glory entrusted to Him by the Father for them. His eyes are ever by the rivers of life and love which flow from the throne of God and from the Sanctuary above, conveying blessings wherever they come—the rivers of godly sorrow and deep contrition flowing down the faces of those in whom His sufferings abound. His eyes are set in fulness. This led us to dwell upon the fulness of the earth which is for His bride, the Church, the fulness of His grace and glory with which He never fails to meet every spiritual need of His afflicted brethren. We are brought this morning to meditate upon the very blessed words I have read for you as my text,

"His cheeks are as beds of spices, as sweet flowers."

May it be ours by the teaching and anointing of the Holy Ghost to seek a little instruction and encouragement from these metaphors and mysteries. Metaphorical they are to the Spirit-taught, yet they abound with spiritual instruction and consolation. Mysterious and meaningless are they to all those who are left to wander amid the dark regions of spiritual ignorance and error. Well might the Saviour say unto His enquiring disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand" (Luke viii. 10).

"*His cheeks.*" This is an expression flowing from the heart of the bride by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, to describe what the Lord Jesus Christ really and truly is to her in experience, knowledge, and understanding. His cheeks are named to set forth the aspect of His face, or countenance. The face is said to be the index of the mind, so when the cheeks or face of Christ are spoken of, we judge of His disposition, mind, and heart toward His bride who has been embraced in His bosom of love from the ages of eternity. As we are led by the Holy Ghost to look at a few portions of the Word which are familiar to our minds, the meaning of which, in connection with our text, has been hidden from our view, we shall see much that is instructive and refreshing to our spirits. The face of JEHOVAH-JESUS. This is a figure of speech which reveals His favour and love to, or anger and hatred against, whom He will. Turn to Psa. xxxiv. 16: "The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Contrast with this Psa. xxxi. 16: "Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant: save me for Thy mercies' sake." In the first of these quotations His face is represented as against some, while the second expresses the cry of one in experimental oneness with Jesus in His sufferings, for the light, joy, and smile of His countenance.

"His frown is hell,  
His smile is heaven."

In one case His face reveals wrath against all those who are outside the pale of His grace, and who are not included in His covenant of love. In the other case it denotes the affection of His heart toward those of whom we can sing with the spirit and with the understanding also,

"'Twas with an everlasting love  
That God His own elect embrac'd,  
Before He made the worlds above,  
Or earth on her huge columns plac'd.  
Long ere the sun's refulgent ray  
Primeval shades of darkness drove,  
They on His sacred bosom lay,  
Lov'd with an everlasting love."

The affections of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ are

ever the same, and cannot be affected or influenced by any change, weakness, or infirmity in His people. His love is invincible, immutable, and inexhaustible. Its fulness can never be diminished. Its power can never be weakened. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1). Turn with me to Psa. lxxxiv. 9, where the Psalmist, praying to his God under a sense of his utter unworthiness and undeservedness, cried, "Behold, O God, our Shield, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed." He knew that his God could see everything that yielded Him infinite and ineffable delight in the face of His Christ. One has very well said, "The countenance is a crystal wherein the thoughts and affections, otherwise invisible, appear; and is a natural sign known to all. It is by the face also that one man is known and distinguished from another; and it is a matter of admiration, that so few parts composing it, and in so small a compass, and always in the same situation, yet there is such a diversity of faces in the world. These innumerable different characters in the faces of men, is the counsel of a most wise Providence, for the universal benefit of the world; for human societies cannot be preserved without union and distinction: the one prevents division, the other confusion; and this distinction is caused by the variety of countenances." It is by the face that the grief or joy, sorrow or consolation, hatred or love, folly or wisdom, desire or disgust, of a person is known. In the face the disposition of the heart is detected. Yet here oftentimes mistakes are made. You all remember Samuel's lack of discernment as recorded in 1 Sam. xvi. 6, 7: "And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Yes, we look upon the face, and according to its aspect we judge, but our judgment is not always just. When God looks upon the face, He sees the heart, and cannot be deceived. When He looks upon the face of His Anointed, He sees the heart, love, affection, and compassion of Jesus to His Church and people, and their spiritual oneness of heart with Him in the worship of a covenant God and Father. Between the worshippers and the worshipped there is sweet agreement. Their minds are fixed upon the same Object, the Lord Jesus Christ. Upon Him the Father's eyes are feasting with unceasing and ineffable complacency, and He is the one Object of deep and untold delight to the heart of His waiting people. The Father looks upon the Son of His love, and His eyes of love attract those of His people to the same Object, where they meet in blessed and hallowed agreement. Here a covenant God and eternally-loved sinners rejoice together. Sweet, spiritual

harmonies prevail—no discordant sounds—no jarring notes are there to mar the peace and quietness of God which passeth all understanding, and which keeps the hearts and minds of His people in the knowledge and love of Him and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. As I am known and discerned by my face, so JEHOVAH is known and discerned in the person of Jesus Christ. In His cheeks or face I understand those blessed words set before us in John i. 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." In keeping with this the beloved John wrote to the Church: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." In the incarnation of the Son of God His pure, sinless, and spotless humanity is presented to our wondering and adoring view, and through that humanity the glories and perfection of Godhead in connection with every point and particular of His people's salvation. As God is thus revealed to the waiting hearts of His children, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and without hesitancy or presumption cry, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Our fellowship with the Father is in the unutterable delight He has in His Son Jesus Christ. Our fellowship with Jesus Christ is in the unspeakable pleasure He had in subjecting Himself to His Father's will, and in revealing it to our adoring hearts.

*"His cheeks."* As we contemplate the face or person of our blessed Saviour as revealed in His glorious Gospel, we see modesty beaming forth at every step He took from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross. His spirit was meek and lowly; His temper unassuming; His deportment unobtrusive. The modesty of Christ is a theme which delights the mind of the Spirit-taught family, and will fill the angelic intelligencies before the throne with wonder throughout a never-ending eternity. From ages He stood in the glory of the Father, and in the perfections of His majestic grace. He who was sovereign Lord over all things descended to the level of a babe, ay, to be a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people (Psalm xxii. 6). Though equal with the Father, He became subject to Him. The Creator and Monarch of all, yet He became subject to the creatures of His hand. Though the Framer and Giver of God's holy and righteous law, yet He became obedient to every jot and tittle of it for His people. Though He was the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of His person, yet with modesty, meekness, and mildness, at which angelic minds are staggered, He comes down

to wait upon His own, attend them at every step, minister to the necessities of the needy, the weaknesses of the weak, and the perplexities of His weary pilgrims. He washes the filthy, clothes the naked, feeds the hungry, and graces the graceless, so that when the Father looks upon them, He beholds them perfect, righteous, and complete. He cannot see one flaw, blot, or spot in all the will, way, or work of Christ, which He has made over, reckoned to, and placed upon His own elect. But the modesty of Christ shone the brightest when the days were darkest to Him. Toward the close of His existence upon earth, the clouds of judgment gathered thickly around Him. The flaming sword of JEHOVAH'S justice was fully awake against the Man, His Fellow, and the powers of hellish and human malice were concentrated against Him. "It pleased JEHOVAH to bruise Him and put Him to grief" (Isaiah liii. 10), and those whom His hands had created, wounded and distressed Him, as set forth in Isaiah li. 6: "I gave My back to the smiters, and *My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair*: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." Here we see our blessed Lord willingly descending to the lowest depths of human degradation, to the lowest depths of His people's sorrows and sufferings, and for them enduring what no mortal ever experienced before or since. Turn to Micah v. 1: "Now gather thyself together in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: *they shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.*" If you desire full proof of this in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, read Matt. xxvi. 67: "Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, who is it that smote Thee?" Also Matt. xxvii. 30: "And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head." By the bruising He received, and the sufferings He endured, the sweet fragrance of redeeming love flows forth from His adorable person, His lovely face, *His modest cheeks* which "*are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers.*" As I am led to contemplate the mystery of His incarnation, His suretyship suffering in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, His humiliation in the judgment hall, His desertion amid the wild heights of Calvary, and His heart broken with reproach, I see my redemption secured on the basis of inexorable and eternal truth. Justice cannot be moved from its purpose, but will have its due either from the sinner or the Surety. If I am left to myself, hell must be my portion. If I am found in the hands of the Surety of the covenant, heaven itself must be my eternal home. O how blessed it is to contemplate the glorious truth that in the person of my Lord and Saviour all the law's demands have been met and answered, and every question of sin between me and my God have been everlastingly settled! It is a precious privilege to gaze upon that face of His which was once marred more than any man's

(Isaiah lii. 14), and was so uncomely in the eyes and estimation of His fellows that they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. That very face, now in the presence of the Father's glory, is all beauty, grace, and comeliness, and the revelation of its beauty, grace, and comeliness is the joy and rejoicing of all those in blessed and hallowed association with Him.

*"His cheeks."* I love to contemplate the glorious perfections of our adorable Saviour as expressed in the exact language of the Scriptures of truth. Seeking the guidance and teaching of God the ever-blessed Spirit, we will look at a portion or two which set forth the mind, will, purpose, and pleasure of JEHOVAH in the cheeks of Jesus Christ. Turn with me to 2 Cor. iv. 4—6. Writing of the lost, the reprobate, the apostle says: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"Lord, what a heaven of saving grace  
Shines thro' the beauties of Thy face,  
And lights our passions to a flame!  
Lord, how we love Thy charming name!"

Come with me to Proverbs xvi. 15: "In the light of the King's countenance is life." As I have said before, the face is the index of the mind, or that crystal in which the thoughts, purposes, dispositions, and emotions of the mind are revealed. So in the person, face, or cheeks of our glorious King-Priest eternal life, the life of God, is revealed and communicated to the elect and redeemed of God. The hiding of His face is death, dreariness, and desolation to those who have lived beneath His smile. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when He hideth His face, who then can behold Him?" (Job xxxiv. 29). By nature, death and darkness are our lot; but in experimental oneness with our Saviour-God, we can say with Paul, "GOD hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 9, 10). You have seen in the benediction pronounced by the high priest of the Jewish dispensation, as recorded in Num. vi. 24—26, that the face of JEHOVAH in blessing, is the manifestation of His grace to His own. See! "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up His countenance

upon thee, and give thee peace." Many portions may be found which show that the countenance expresses sorrow or joy, favour or wrath. A sense of Divine disapprobation caused Cain's countenance to fall (Gen. iv. 5, 6). His face revealed the secret of his heart's enmity to the sovereign will of JEHOVAH, and his hatred of his elect and accepted brother Abel. The morning after the butler and baker had dreamed their dreams, when Joseph came in to them, he saw by the sadness of their faces the sorrow of their hearts, and said unto them, "Wherefore are your faces evil?" (Gen. xl. 6, 7). In God's dealings with His people, providentially or spiritually, they judge concerning Him, but even His darkest dispensations are for their good and for His glory.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face."

This is illustrated in the case of Jacob when he spoke to his wives respecting the hard treatment he received at the hands of their father Laban. See Gen. xxxi. 4, 5: "And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before." Coldness, suspicion, envy, and jealousy were detected in Laban's face by Jacob. But love, favour, confidence, and affection, beam forth from a loving and approving countenance. You see this confessed in the outpouring of the Psalmist's heart in Psalm iv. 6: "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? LORD, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." Again in Psalm xxi. 6: "For Thou hast made him most blessed for ever; Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance," or, as you read in the margin, "*gladdened him with joy.*" The presence or face of JEHOVAH is the salvation and joy of His people, as we read in Psalm xlii. 5, "Why art thou bowed down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance;" or, according to the marginal rendering, which is most precious, "*His presence is salvation.*" As I am led by the Spirit into an experimental knowledge of the Gospel of Christ, there I see His face, I adore His person, I behold my God, and the marvellous mysteries of grace which the Father has hidden in Him for me, I rejoice in the possession of life, love, favour, salvation, and safety. Yes, eternal, undisturbed safety and security. See Psalm xxxi. 20: "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence, from the pride of man: Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." How blessed it is for us to know that in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was once marred as no man's, which indicated the endurance of sufferings for us unknown before, we possess salvation, succour, sympathy, and security.



"*His cheeks.*" I love to dwell upon that sweet narrative of face to face talk between JEHOVAH and Moses as recorded in Exodus xxxiii. Begin to read at verse 12, "And Moses said unto the LORD, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight. Now, therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight: and consider that this nation is Thy people. And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." The presence of our God is salvation. The presence of JEHOVAH-JESUS is security. The presence of our adorable Emmanuel affords a rest, a peace, a quietness, which all the powers of hell and sin can never disturb or destroy. O my dear friends, this is something solid and substantial for us to consider, and it will be the cause of our everlasting and uninterrupted joy, when, through a long eternity upon His glorious throne,

"—— we shall see His face,  
And never, never sin;  
There from the rivers of His grace,  
Drink endless pleasures in."

As the eye of precious faith is fixed upon His fulness; as the eye of fond affection is entranced with His beauty; as the eye of spiritual understanding contemplates His blessedness, we enjoy intimacy, familiarity, and fellowship with Him. Moses knew something of this, according to Exodus xxxiii. 11: "And the LORD spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." You see the same in the case of Jacob at Peniel, where, after the Covenant Angel had wrestled with him, he said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. xxxii. 30). What is the meaning of the word Peniel? "*The face of God*" (see margin). In ancient days all Israel, in the person of the high priest, held communion with God face to face. As the blood of atonement met JEHOVAH'S view, wrath, fury, indignation, and anger were hushed into silence. Now, as He looks upon the face of His Anointed, fury is not in Him. Our precious Christ endured and exhausted all the wrath of God against the sins of His people. All the sins of the whole election of grace were everlastingly drowned in the sufferings and sorrows of the God-Man Mediator in Gethsemane and upon Calvary, and now in the heights of glory He appears the Object of His Father's ineffable affection, and in His face the Father reads the acceptance of all His elect brethren. With the knowledge of this we are privileged sometimes to sigh or sing:—

"O look on Thine Anointed One;  
Thy gift of Him is all our plea,  
Our righteousness—what He hath done,  
Our prayer—His prayer for us to Thee."

Look at that precious verse, Psalm xvi. 11 : "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in *Thy presence is fullness of joy*; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." The whole of this Psalm, according to Peter's quotation from it on the day of Pentecost, alludes to the person, work, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. See Acts ii. 25—28 : "For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved : therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope : because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, *Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance.*" With a heavenly, experimental interest in the person, love, blood, righteousness, and resurrection of Jesus, and as we contemplate in His face the mysteries of redeeming love, and the perfection of His redeeming work, our souls are refreshed with the Psalmist's hope : "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness" (Psalm xvii. 15).

"*His cheeks are as a bed of spices.*" The cheeks of a person in full health and vigour are plump and blooming, not sunken with disease. In the face of Jesus, the saving health of JEHOVAH (Psalm lxvii. 2) abounds, and is communicated to His people by the refreshing and reviving power of God the Holy Ghost. His cheeks, His face, His Gospel appears to them as a bed of spices, or aromatic flowers and shrubs, delightful to the sight, and pleasant to the smell. The perfection of beauty, fragrance, and sweetness, as found in the person, offices, salvation, and sympathy of Jesus, is the life and health of all those in living and loving union with Him. Here let me ask you, What fragrance is so sweet as that emitted from the flower-beds of redemption, salvation, righteousness, and intercession which bloom in God's garden ? What spices are so sweet as those which flow from the bruised body, suffering spirit, and broken heart of the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ? You, who know anything of this, must enjoy that precious poem by Hart upon Gethsemane :—

"Eden, from each flowery bed,  
Did for man short sweetness breathe ;  
Soon, by Satan's counsel led,  
Man wrought sin, and sin wrought death :  
But of life, the healing tree  
Grows in rich Gethsemane."

Tell me, what is there half so sweet to the living children of God as fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings ? However painful or perplexing the pathway may be, the suffering members of the Redeemer's body will prove this to be blessedly true,

"For though our cup seems fill'd with gall,  
There's something secret sweetens all."

Though the bitterness may be so great as to wring many sighs and groans from the exercised heart of Zion's pilgrim, he would not be without it for ten thousand worlds. It is in this experience he learns that precious lesson: "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation" (2 Cor. i. 5, 6). The name of Jesus is rich with royal fragrance. "Thy name is as ointment poured forth," is the confession of the bride in Song i. 3.

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear."

None but praying souls can tell anything of the sweetness and over-powering fragrance of our great High Priest's intercession. As in the tabernacle in the wilderness, sweet incense was offered to God from the golden altar, so from the altar of our Lord's divinity the sweet incense of His all-prevalent intercession ever ascends, meeting the deep delight of His Father, and refreshing the drooping spirits of His brethren in those spots of necessity experienced in His garden which He has enclosed for their communion and intercourse with Him.

"The fragrant incense of His prayer,  
To heaven went up through yielding air:  
Perfum'd the throne of God on high,  
And calm'd offended Majesty."

Here I would ask you again, What is there so delightful to the eye, so sweet to the taste, or so fragrant to the nose as these beds of spices, Suretyship sufferings, eternal redemption, everlasting righteousness, finished salvation, and all-powerful intercession?

"*His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers,*" or, according to the margin, "*towers of perfume.*" The words may also be rendered, "*mounds of balsams.*" In every revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ to His bride, the Church, towers of perfume, mounds of balsams, abound. Here the flowers of faith, hope, love, joy, and peace appear; but when He is withdrawn from view, these seem to droop and languish. The deserted one sighs, I have no faith! my hope is gone!

"If I love, why am I thus?  
Why this dull and lifeless frame?  
Hardly, sure, can they be worse  
Who have never heard His name."

I cannot lay claim to any of the precious fruits which grow in

the garden of the Beloved. Langour and listlessness are mine instead of vivacity in the ways of the Lord. Instead of ranging the heights of covenant favour like a hind let loose, I am bound in a dry and desert land. Ah, my dear friends, we ofttimes look below, around, and within, but nothing but weariness, dreariness, and desolation meet our view. It is in Christ, the Father's repository of all blessing, life, and salvation, the bed of spices, the flowers of grace, the fruits of righteousness, are found. Look at this glorious truth: "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. i. 14). You see grace, faith, and love abound in Christ Jesus for His people. I look within sometimes, and try to discover in my wretched self that which can never be found there; but towering perfumes, heaps of witness, and mounds of Gilead's balms can only be found in Christ. Turn to Gal. v. 22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Here I would have you notice this remarkable distinction:—

The works of the flesh.

The fruit of the Spirit.

Works, plural, denoting diversity and disorder. Fruit, singular, denoting unity and order. You look at all these which are styled "the fruit of the Spirit," but you mourn and say, I possess not all these; how, then, can I lay claim to those beauties, blessings, and benefits which abound by Him? or, how can I hope for fellowship with the Father by Him? Let me ask you to enumerate "the works of the flesh, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Can you find a man in all Camberwell who manifests all these works of the flesh? I unhesitatingly answer, You cannot. I have known a drunkard who was a thoroughly honest man in business transactions, to whom thieving, overreaching, or false measures were truly hateful. You may come across dishonest persons who hate drunkenness and uncleanness. These "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another" (Rom. ii. 15). What does that mean? It means that a sinner will excuse in himself that which he accuses in another. So we find those who are steeped in a certain kind of vice, hating and despising others for vices of a different class, while both are equally hateful in the sight of a just and holy God. It is scarcely possible to find one man in whom all these works of the flesh are manifest. Here I would ask you another question: Can you find me a man, woman, or child, under the power, grace, and guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit who manifests at one and the same time all these

which are distinguished as the fruit of the Spirit? I think you cannot. One child of God is remarkable for his love, like John; another is distinguished by his faith, as was Abraham; another, like Job, for his patience. But rarely will you see all in the same person at the same time. Now, then, if one of these set before us under "the fruit of the Spirit" be found in a poor, trembling, doubting sinner, if the slightest manifestation of Divine life, Divine light, or Divine love is experienced in the heart of such, there is a blessed evidence that in the face, or person of the Beloved, thou art accepted of the Father. A bed of sweet spices shall be thine where thy soul shall rest in sweet oneness with thy God in peace, rest, and unbroken repose. Accomplished redemption, perfected salvation, prevailing intercession, and covenant love shall be thine for ever and ever.

May the Lord add His blessing for His own name's sake.  
Amen.

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#### H Y M N .

WHAT wonders in my Saviour meet!  
His head, His hands, His side, His feet,  
Present to my astonish'd view  
Eternal glories, ever new.

Poor and despis'd—yet rich and lov'd—  
Humble to death, His throne unmov'd,  
A servant and a sovereign Lord,  
Revil'd and murder'd, yet ador'd.

Pardon and life are His to give,  
He died that all His Church might live:  
Became a curse, yet deigns to bless;  
He is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

He had not where to lay His head,  
Although the worlds were by Him made;  
He hunger'd, though He thousands fed:  
Sinless, and yet for sin He bled.

The Father's co-eternal Son,  
The Friend of sinners (though undone);  
The Portion living children crave,  
He's Man to suffer—God to save.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S LIPS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
AUGUST 10TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.”—Song of Solomon v. 13.

THE bride of Christ, under the grace and guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, continues her description of the varied beauties and rare excellencies of her heavenly Bridegroom. In the revelation of each feature she finds some new delight. In the discovery of each part of His perfect body she admires some covenant purpose, precious promise, spiritual blessing, or gracious performance. She glories to contemplate Him whom the Holy Ghost delights to glorify. She is pleased to dwell upon those glorious and matchless perfections and transcendent excellencies which the blessed Spirit is pleased to take and show unto her enlightened understanding, appreciative faith, and fond affections. In the body of her glorious Ishi she beholds the finest and fairest form of humanity that ever dwelt upon this earth of ours. If His head is revealed, she beholds His sovereignty and crowns Him Lord of all. If His locks appear, she admires His counsels and communications. If He turns His eyes of love to her, she is overcome with an adoring sense of His omniscience, and delights in the knowledge of His sweet sympathy. Are His cheeks revealed in all their bloom of health and beauty? She beholds in them her salvation, safety, and security. We are brought this morning to dwell upon these precious words which I have read for you as my text,—

“His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.”

We will endeavour, by the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, to seek for a little instruction, comfort, and encouragement by considering the words in their Scriptural order.

I.—THE METAPHOR.—“His lips.”

No. 141.—PRICE ONE PENNY.

II.—THE COMPARISON—"Like lilies."

III.—THE COMMUNICATION—"Dropping sweet smelling myrrh."

I.—THE METAPHOR—"His lips." We read in God's blessed Word of the lip and the lips. In the description given of the leper, his loathsome disease, and the law relative to the same, the lips are described as the upper and lower parts of the mouth. See Lev. xiii. 45: "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, *and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip*, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean." If we turn to Gen. xi. 1, we see that the word "lip" means language. You have the same in Zeph. iii. 9: "For then will I turn to the people a pure language," or "*lip*." (See margin.) In another place it means the expression of the state and condition of the heart, as, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness" (Prov. x. 32). Again, "Lying lips are abomination to the LORD; but they that deal truly are His delight" (Prov. xii. 22). Who are the possessors of lying lips? Not only those who are dead in trespasses and sins; but those also who in their dealings with each other are faithful, honest, and true, yet when brought to consider and confess their true state before God in respect to their dealings with Him, say, "For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us: and as for our iniquities, we know them: in transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood" (Isa. lix. 12, 13). Blessed be God, from all such confessors the Lord will purge away the lip of lying. But the word "lips" in our text refers to our Lord Jesus Christ in the communications of His gracious mind and will, His Father's purposes of love, and the treasures of His kingdom. Turn with me to Prov. xvi. 13: "Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love Him that speaketh right." Who are the kings mentioned here? Are they the great and mighty potentates of the earth? Nay. I love to see in every portion of God's blessed Word a precious Christ in union with those whom He has ennobled. I see these described in Rev. i. 5, 6: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." These kings love the lips of Him who ever speaks in righteousness, and is mighty to save (Isa. lxiii. 1). The gracious lip communications of our adorable Lord convince His loved ones of the need of a perfect righteousness, and then reveal this righteousness in His perfect obedience and precious person. He is thus to us "The Lord our Righteousness," and we are "made the righteousness of God in Him" (Jer. xxxiii. 16; 2 Cor. v. 21). We read again, "The lip of Truth shall be established for

ever ; but a lying tongue is but for a moment " (Prov. xii. 19) ; and " The lips of the Wise disperse knowledge " (Prov. xv. 7). Go through the whole of this blessed book and you will see that every spiritual bounty, blessing, and benefit of God's everlasting covenant flows from the lips of Zion's Beloved in spiritual communication to all true Zionites. As we are thus led by God the ever-blessed Spirit, we behold the Lord Jesus Christ speaking His love and grace to His wanting and waiting people, and declaring His will on their behalf to His Father and theirs. Notice that wonderful chapter which I read for our instruction and encouragement this morning : John xvii. Here we see Him, not communicating His mind and will to His people directly, but with His lips expressing to the Father the things He had accomplished, and the blessings He would communicate to them. He spake His own words, and yet they were not His own ; but words given to Him in covenant before the worlds were framed — words just suited to the wants and necessities of His tried and tempted people, words of life to His own elect who were dead in sins, words of comfort and consolation to His mourners in Zion, and words of spiritual preservation to His redeemed who were feelingly ready to perish. Look at the eighth verse : " For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me ; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." He gives to His people words of life and conviction by which they are brought to a true knowledge of their lost and ruined state, and of salvation by grace through His adorable person, precious blood, and perfect righteousness. They are words of spirit and life though spoken in parables, metaphors, and figures. You see this in John vi. He had been speaking of those who ate His body and drank His blood, while the majority of those who heard Him had no spiritual understanding of the words He spake, but, like the Papists and Ritualists of the present day, they saw nothing higher than the flesh. The living child of God, as he is led into a spiritual understanding and apprehension of these metaphors, delights in that hidden provision which Christ is pleased to communicate day by day in a heavenly manner for his sustenance, nourishment, and establishment. When Jesus taught thus, " Many of His disciples when they heard, said, This is a hard saying ; who can hear it ? When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Doth this offend you ? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before ? It is the Spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Spiritual in their communication and effects. The apostle Paul, I doubt not, had respect to this when he wrote Heb. iv. 12 : " For the Word of God is quick and powerful." What is a word ? An articulate sound by which the mind and thoughts of



persons are communicated. What is the Word of God? Not simply a sound, but a person by whom JEHOVAH'S mind and will are communicated to His children. "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Here I see the Lord Jesus Christ as the Father's Word in covenant, creation, and communication, by whom poor broken-hearted, yet highly-favoured, sinners hold communion with the Father, Spirit, and Himself. It is Christ's sole prerogative to communicate the mind and will of the Father in His own words, and these not one more or less than the number given unto Him for them in covenant before all worlds. They are piercing, dividing, and separating words. Well might He say concerning them, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

"*His lips.*" He not only speaks words of separation, but it is His delight to speak of that glorious salvation wrought out by Him for His people. This you will see in Isa. lxiii. 1, where the enquiry goes forth, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?" This glorious Conqueror and Deliverer answers for Himself: "*I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.*" He ever speaks words of righteousness to His Father for His people, and to His people for His Father, through, and in which they shall stand everlastingly righteous and accepted in Him, the Beloved. The words of His lips are also those of preserving power to all those who are brought into the sweet enjoyment of their Father's will through Him. See how blessedly this is stated in the experience of the Psalmist in Psa. xvii. 4. We will begin to read at the first verse: "Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry: give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips. Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence; let Thine eyes behold the things that are equal." The things that are equal are only to be found in Christ. Words of preserving power can only be heard from the lips of Christ. "Concerning the works of men, *by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.*" Only by the word of His lips, the word flowing from the lips of a precious Christ, the Communicator of His Father's will to His people, can there be real preservation from the corruptions of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and the temptations of the devil. This was the reason why the apostle, in counselling the saints concerning the words which flow from their lips, says: "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. iv. 6). Mark you! a man may stand up and preach God's free-grace with wonderful acceptance to crowds so long as he will take care not to use those objectionable words, election and

predestination. I have known, and still know, professed free-grace preachers who say there is no necessity whatever to use the words election and predestination, which are so offensive to many dear Methodists. These may resort to such dishonest and God-dishonouring tricks for the purpose of keeping a congregation of dead professors together; but I would rather scatter a congregation to the four winds than keep it on such hateful ground as that. It is possible for a man to preach with gracious words and hold a people fascinated with the honeyed terms which fall from his lips; but let a little of the salt of the covenant be dropped, and offence is immediately given. The pure truth of God, which binds the elect together, is sure to scatter those who hate its pungency and power. I do love that expression, "*the word of Thy lips.*" There is a marvellous difference between the words from a man's lips and those from his pen. There are those from whom I love to receive communications, if not personally, through the post; and there are many who love to receive communications from me, but who are oftentimes disappointed through an increase of labour, mentally and physically. But in my communications with my friends I love to look in their faces, notice the twinkle of their eyes, watch the movements of their lips, and receive the warm gush of love and affection flowing in living words from their hearts and lips. So it is with all those who are blessed with living and loving union to a precious Christ. They have His written Word containing His mind and will, which truly gratifies their adoring spirits, but will never fully satisfy the cravings and desires of that nature which finds its blessedness in Himself. The lost, who have been sought, found, and saved by a gracious Saviour, can never be truly blessed but in His sacred presence. The bride, who has felt the warm embracings of the Bridegroom's arms of everlasting love, can never be satisfied with anything short of His glorious presence, gracious communications, and the revelation of Himself in the various forms and features of His adorable person. Does God reveal the truth of the personal, eternal, unconditional election of His people in this blessed Book? He does, and there is scarcely a portion which speaks of this precious truth from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation but what I can quote to you. To this you may exclaim, "What a wonderful memory!" Ah, my dear friends, it is not mere memory that I boast in. I need the covenant Remembrancer to refresh my treacherous memory with those spiritual realities which He has revealed to me again and again. The bare abstract theory of God's election will not satisfy my longing spirit. I can, and God knows I do sometimes, sing with my heart these precious words:—

"Though God's election be a truth,  
 Small comfort there I see,  
 Unless I'm told by God's own mouth  
 That He has chosen me."

I not only want to know this from the lips of my God, but I long for the sweets of His gracious company, according to the expressed desire of Moses in Exod. xxxiii. 16: "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? *is it not in that Thou goest with us?* so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." A present God in the midst of His children by the power of the Holy Ghost alone can give them to know their election, sanctification, and separation from the corrupt mass of mankind.

*"His lips."* Every spiritual and heavenly communication I am favoured with must come from the grace-filled lips of God's Christ. This blessed Book is full of exceeding great and precious promises to the seed-royal of heaven. I find it teeming with them to the elect, redeemed, and regenerate children of God, to the poor and needy, who are oftentimes seeking water, but finding none. I can find you scores of promises in the Book, but I long to know and feel them in the laud of Divine revelation, spiritual promise, and covenant relationship. "For all the promises of God in Christ are Yea, and in Him Amen" (2 Cor. i. 20). It is in Him spiritually and experimentally that I long for the communication of these spiritual promises and enjoyment of covenant and heavenly affection. This was the ardent desire of the bride, as set forth in Song i. 2: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." That is the desire of our hearts. We do not want to know Him simply by reading His Book, or communing with His saints. We sigh for His loving embrace, for His affectionate smile, for His inspiring look, and for the sweet kisses of His mouth. These are the spiritual desires of the chaste, the confiding, and affectionate bride for the company and confidence of her heavenly Bridegroom. She can never be satisfied with communications from Him while she is at a felt distance from Him.

"Lord! it is not life to live,  
If Thy presence Thou deny;  
Lord! if Thou Thy presence give,  
'Tis no longer death to die:  
Source and Giver of repose,  
Only from Thy love it flows!  
Peace and happiness are Thine—  
Mine they are, if Thou art mine."

A Saviour nigh at hand is the satisfaction desired by living souls. Their individual cry is, "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" (Psa. ci. 2). Bring to my anxious heart those exceeding great and precious promises which the Father has committed to Thy care for me. O holy and blessed Spirit, glorify the Father's Christ in my heart's experience, witness to His beauty, bounty, and blessedness; open up the treasures of rich, sovereign, irresistible, and invincible grace which are to be found alone in Him. The promises, as they appear in the Word, are precious;

but when they are brought home with sovereign power to my heart, they are precious indeed.

"*Thy lips.*" The promises in the Word are sweet, but when spoken to the heart from the lips of Christ, none can tell their sweetness. His lips are filled and ever flowing with words of love, life, salvation, and preservation. I do love that precious Scripture in Psa. xvii. 4: "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." If you will turn to Jer. xv. 15, 16, you will see that the prophet knew something of this matter. He says: "O LORD, Thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in Thy long-suffering; know that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Thy words were found, and I did eat them: and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts." When the words of the Lord are spoken home to the heart of a child of grace by the power of the Holy Ghost, a season of joy and rejoicing is experienced. The forgiveness of all sin is enjoyed, the justification of his person is realised, and introduction to the Father, with acceptance by Him, is the delight of his spirit. For this Job groaned, and sighed, and blessedly experienced, according to his confession in chap. xxiii. 12: "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." In seasons of anxiety, desertion, and temptation it is most precious to find Him speaking His words of love to our despairing hearts. Sometimes He speaks a word or two in the midst of what may appear to us a long rigmarole of the preacher, sometimes in our Bible reading, when the whole of the Book appears like a barren heath, then, in a moment, the voice of the loving Bridegroom of our hearts is heard, and

"A joy springs up amid distress,  
A fountain in the wilderness."

This is according to His own most gracious promise to His Church, recorded in Hos. ii. 14—16: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and *speaking comfortably unto her*. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call Me Ishi (that is, *my Husband*), and shalt call me no more Baali" (that is, *my Lord*). It was the knowledge of this which caused the Psalmist to say: "I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints, but let them not turn again to folly" (Psa. lxxxv. 8).

"*His lips.*" Turn with me to that precious description of the kingly Bridegroom in Psa. xlv. 2: "Thou art fairer than the children of men: *grace is poured into Thy lips*: therefore God

hath blessed Thee for ever." Grace was poured into His lips, not so much for Himself as for His people. His lips prevail with God for His people, and with His people for God. Words of grace were poured from His anointed lips to the wonder and astonishment of those who are privileged to listen to them. See Luke iv. 22: "And all bare witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." From the lips of our great High Priest words of pardoning grace are poured. From the lips of our all-prevailing Advocate words of justifying grace unceasingly flow. From the lips of the Brother once born for adversity words of comforting grace are spoken to the weary and sorrowing souls of His tempted brethren. See how blessedly this is stated in Isa. l. 4: "The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." His was the tongue of the taught One, who learned in the school of temptation and suffering, to meet His tried and tempted brethren in their afflictions, and to cheer, comfort, revive, and refresh them "with good words and comfortable words" (Zech. i. 13). To this covenant office and work He was fully appointed, as we gather from the words of the Baptist in John iii. 34: "For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." He always speaks the right words at the right time. He says, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain. I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right" (Isa. xlv. 19). His words must be right, for they are all in accordance with covenant arrangements, and by the commandment and authority of His Father. To the Jews He declared His obedience to the Father in every word proceeding from His lips. See John viii. 28, 38: "I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. I speak that which I have seen with My Father." Again He says in John xii. 49, 50, "For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." As the Wisdom of God in covenant He cries, "Hear, for I will speak of excellent things: and the opening of My lips shall be right things. For My mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to My lips. All the words of My mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge" (Prov. viii. 6—9). Many in the days of His flesh found this to be true. The heart of the sick of the palsy rejoiced as he heard the gracious declaration, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. ix. 2). To the poor

woman with the bloody issue He graciously said, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace" (Luke viii. 48). To His sorrowing disciples He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John. xiv. 27). To His terrified and affrighted disciples, on resurrection ground, He said, "Peace be unto you. Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet" (Luke xxiv. 36—40). Those who have been blessed with the sounds of Heaven's sweet harmonies from His sacred lips, can join with the Psalmist and sing, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psa. xix. 10, 11). To His tempest-tossed one He says,—

"Forget thee I will not, I cannot; thy name  
Engrav'd on My heart does for ever remain;  
The palms of My hands while I look on I see  
The wounds I received when suffering for thee.

I feel at My heart all thy sighs and thy groans,  
For thou art most near Me, My flesh and My bones;  
In all thy distresses thy Head feels the pain;  
Yet all are most needful; not one is in vain."

"*His lips like lilies.*" Not white lilies, for there would be no consistency or beauty in such a metaphor; but the red lilies of the East. This denotes health, and it is our blessed privilege to know that JEHOVAH'S saving health is made known to all the nations of the saved from the grace-filled lips of our Lord Jesus Christ, into whose lips grace was poured by a covenant God for His covenant people. Red and scarlet speak precious lessons to our waiting hearts. The scarlet line of dear old Rahab on the walls of Jericho speaks many a glorious truth to enlightened understandings. Red, draws the mind to consider the sufferings, sorrows, agonies, and blood-shedding of our most glorious Christ on the behalf of His people. In this precious metaphor we behold Him speaking of perfected redemption, pardon, and peace by His most precious wounds and blood. It is He alone who can and does willingly speak pardon, purity, and peace to scarlet sinners, and all through His agony and bloody sweat, His cruel cross and passion. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18). To His suffering and afflicted people He says, "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not, for *I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art*

Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." Mark well what follows. It is not simply I have redeemed thee with My precious blood, but I will sacrifice all creation with the great men thereof for thee. This is a terrible truth to the proud professor and the haughty oppressor of God's Zion. These He will give over to the sword and devote to destruction and damnation for the sake of His people. Pharaoh, and all opposers of JEHOVAH'S sovereignty shall be still as a stone in the waters of judgment while God's ransomed pass over to the enjoyment of unceasing bliss and blessedness. "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life" (Isa. xliii. 1—4). Tell me, you who know something of His redeeming love and blood, have we not something here of sanguinary judgments upon the reprobate, while perfect salvation and eternal redemption are the lot of the elect who are led through the Red Sea of atoning blood? Ay, indeed we have. But I must hasten on, for time flies, and will wait for no one.

"*His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.*" What does that word "*myrrh*" indicate? In every portion of God's blessed Word where it occurs, the mind of the Spirit-taught family is led to consider something of bitterness, suffering, affliction, and distress. It is a gum extracted from a tree which grows in the East. Incisions are made in the trunk from which it flows. It is pleasant to the smell, but bitter to the taste. Were not wrath, judgment, and desertion bitter to Him who endured them all for us, while the message of redeeming love and blood is precious and fragrant to us? "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. It pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief; when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah liii. 5—10). From the piercings of Jesus' hands, feet, side, and thorn-crowned brow flowed salvation and sympathy to His people. From His sacred lips ascended those glorious words which filled the Father's heart with delight, heaven with rejoicing, hell with consternation, and elect souls with grace, "IT IS FINISHED." Turn with me to Mark xv. 23: "And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but He received it not." Why did He not receive it? Because He had drunk deeply of a bitter cup from His Father's hand in gloomy, dark Gethsemane. There His lips dropped myrrh so

bitter to Him, yet containing a sweetness unspeakable to those in union with Him. Look at Matt. xxvi. 37—39: "Then cometh Jesus with them to a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto His disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful, and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little further and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let let this cup pass from Me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." From His disciples He found no encouragement or sympathy; they were fast asleep. Again and again He went and prayed the same words, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done." Bitter potions were His. Bitter desertion, the hiding of His Father's face, the endurance of the load of sin, judgment, wrath, indignation, and fury, ay, and of damnation due to His people, as dear old Dr. Hawker once said,

"HE DRANK THE CUP OF DAMNATION DRY."

Myrrh from the Father's cup He drank, but refused that presented to him by man. To the dregs He drank of the cup of condemnation, and now He takes the cup of salvation and calls upon the name of the Lord for His tempted disciples (Psalm cxvi. 13). This Psalm speaks wholly of a precious Christ, and those in experimental oneness with Him, brought low in sorrow and distress, and lifted up by the long, strong, powerful arm of sovereign grace. Before the face of the Father He stands for His Church and people, and as His intercession ascends, as His demand for them (John xvii. 24) enters into the ears of the Father, JEHOVAH the Spirit is ready to communicate the blessings, bounties, and benefits which have been treasured up in the everlasting covenant of grace for the time of spiritual want and necessity. Now tell me, Do not His lips drop sweet swelling myrrh? As He graciously reveals to us the sufferings He endured, and tells us of the bitter sorrows He experienced as our sin-bearing Surety, the sweet fragrance thereof is inexpressible. The rich incense of His intercession is the joy and rejoicing of our tried and tempted spirits. It is a blessed thing for me to know that in the midst of all the bitterness of desertion, and the perplexities peculiar to that state described in Isaiah xli. 17, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them." How will He hear them? He will hear them in the person of their Head, Representative, and great High Priest, who ever liveth to make intercession for them. Yes, He will hear them in the words of Him who opens His mouth for the dumb, pleads the cause of the poor, and maintains the right of His afflicted ones. He will hear them in the advocacy of Him through whom they approach Him with the cry,



" Father, in Him we claim our part ;  
 For Thy Son's sake accept us now ;  
 In Him well pleased Thou always art ;  
 Well pleased with us through Him be Thou.

O look on Thine anointed One ;  
 Thy gift of Him is all our plea,  
 Our righteousness—what He hath done,  
 Our prayer—His prayer for us to Thee."

*"His lips drop sweet smelling myrrh "* when I know that the bitterness of eternal condemnation is my desert, but He tells me I cannot be damned because of His sufferings and obedience for me in which He became my everlasting salvation. When failure and infirmity characterise every attempt to worship my God, it is sweet for me to hear from His own lips that His strength is mine. It is sweet for me to know that the very spot of my necessity is where He will show surprising grace. My infirmities will provide opportunities for Him to reveal to my waiting and wanting heart His purposes of love *for* me, His promises of *grace to* me, and His performances of power *in* me. These spiritual communications sweeten every bitter, and cause me to sing with delight,

" Boast not, ye sons of earth,  
 Nor look with scornful eyes ;  
 Above your highest mirth,  
 Our saddest hours we prize ;  
 For though our cup seems fill'd with gall,  
 There's something secret sweetens all."

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

### HYMN.

" FATHER, *I will*," the Saviour cries,  
 And gives Himself a sacrifice,  
 " That where I am, Thy saints may be,  
 In union with Myself and Thee."

" Father, *I will*," the Lord demands,  
 And spreads His interceding hands—  
 " *I will*, that all for whom I died,  
 Be with Me ever glorified."

On this "*I will*" I safely rest,  
 My Jesus pleads—I must be blest ;  
 Soon shall my soul His glory sec,  
 For still He lives and pleads for me.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S HANDS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
AUGUST 17TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl."—Song of Solomon v. 14.

IN contemplating of the beauties and excellencies of Zion's Beloved as revealed by God the ever-blessed Spirit, new delights are ours in each unfolding. Manifold and unsearchable are the spiritual treasures abounding in Him. It has been our privilege for some little time past to dwell upon the adoring confession flowing from the heart of the bride whose admiration and affection were centred wholly in the person of her King and Husband.

She sees *His head*, and glories in His sovereignty.

She contemplates *His locks*, and delights in His purposes.

She looks into *His eyes*, and dreads not His omniscience.

She beholds *His cheeks*, and revels in His beauty.

She hangs upon *His lips*, and glories in His salvation.

This morning we are brought to consider a subject precious and interesting to those who are taught by the Spirit to judge and discern all things, yet they themselves are judged of no man (1 Cor. ii. 15). It is a spiritual fact that those who are brought into experimental oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be rightly understood by any but themselves. The joy they experience is unspeakable (1 Pet. i. 8); the peace they possess passeth all understanding (Phil. iv. 7); the love they enjoy passeth all human knowledge (Eph. iii. 19); they are wonderful, incomprehensible beings: and as we are spiritually identified with them we can say, "The world knoweth us not because it knew Him not" (1 John iii. 1). As I contemplate myself as an object of electing, redeeming mercy, I feel I am a wonder unto many, and I am a wonder to myself. As I look at myself in my natural existence, I wonder how God can have mercy upon a sinner so base and so vile. As I look at myself, a

creature of His providence, preserved through the folly of childhood, the heedlessness of youth, and the sins of manhood, to this very moment, and to this very spot where He is pleased to reveal to me the exceeding riches of His grace; as I am led to consider myself a spiritual man in Christ, I am a wonder to myself. Ofttimes the cry ascends in secret, "Who maketh thee to differ?" or, as you may read in the margin, "*Who distinguisheth thee?*" "or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. iv. 7). As I am made to differ from others by sovereign grace and choice, and all that I enjoy comes in the way of sovereign bounty, I have no room to boast over others. Here I stand as a beggar taken from the dunghill; and brought into the banqueting-house of my King to receive from His gracious hands those blessings with which He supplies my need according to His Father's riches in glory. Being thus favoured with heart union to the great and glorious Head of the Church, it is my privilege to meditate and delight in those personal beauties which He reveals to me by the Holy Ghost. I delight not in relative beauties, neither do I desire to speak of collaterals, nor of the things that accompany salvation. These are all to be prized as very precious as coming through Him, but they will not satisfy the deep and inexpressible cravings of that Divine nature which the Father gives to His children in oneness with the Son of His love. Nothing but Christ Himself will satisfy me. Spiritual blessings are the joy of my heart as they are received by me directly from Himself. Whatever mercy, blessing, or favour the Father has designed for me must be communicated to me from the gracious hands of my loving and ever-adorable Lord. It is the richest mercy I shall enjoy this side heaven's gates to have the witness of the Holy Ghost in my heart that Christ has to do personally with me, and I have to do personally with Him. This was the lot of the bride, as set forth in this Book, and of all the saints whose experiences are recorded in the pages of inspiration. Personal communion with Him, and personal communications from Him, is the custom on new covenant ground. Moses said to Him, "Show me Thy glory" (Exod. xxxiii. 18). David plaintively cried, "O when wilt Thou come to Me?" (Psa. ci. 2). Look at Psa. lxxiii. 1, 2: "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary." We can sometimes sing with the spirit and with the understanding—

"Let me be with Thee where Thou art,  
My Saviour, my eternal Rest;  
Then only will this longing heart  
Be fully and for ever blest."

In humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of His blessed Spirit we will look at the words of the text in their order—

"His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl."

I.—"HIS HANDS"—What do they indicate?

II.—"GOLD RINGS"—What do they teach?

III.—"SET WITH THE BERYL"—What does that mean?

I.—"HIS HANDS"—What do they indicate? As His head denotes His will, His feet His ways, so His hands represent His works. As I contemplate them I sing—

"My heart shall triumph in the Lord,  
And bless His works, and bless His Word!  
His works of grace, how bright they shine!  
How deep His counsels! how Divine!"

In the works of His hands we behold His glorious Godhead. Deity is revealed in every act of His life. Moses knew this when he declared concerning Him: "He is the Rock, *His work is perfect*; for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deut. xxxii. 4). His works of creation, providence, grace, and salvation are the delight of souls in blessed and hallowed association with Him. You see this throughout the book of Psalms. Look at Psa. xcii. 4: "For Thou, LORD, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands." This seen in the light of the preceding verse, "Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound," reveals the Lord Jesus Christ performing with His skilful hands upon the ten strings of His Father's righteous law, and thus producing a righteousness in which His people stand justified and accepted before God. Turn to Psa. cxi. 2, and following verses: "The works of the LORD are great, sought of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious: and His righteousness endureth for ever. He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion. He hath given meat unto them that fear Him. He will ever be mindful of His covenant. He hath showed His people the power of His works, that He may give them the heritage of the heathen. The works of His hands are verity and judgment; all His commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. He sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant for ever: holy and reverend is His name." Here we have a covenant redemption for a covenant people, a covenant righteousness for all those who are His workmanship, created unto good works to walk in them (Eph. ii. 10). These love to remember the days of old, to meditate on all His works, and to muse on the work of His hands (Psa. cxliii. 5). They love to praise His works from one generation to another, and to declare His mighty acts. David expresses this in Psa. cxlv. 5, &c.: "I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of Thy terrible acts: and I will declare Thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of

Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness. All Thy works shall praise Thee, O LORD; and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power. To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom."

"*His hands.*" This metaphorical expression contains in it a fund, ay, a mine of spiritual wealth, instruction, and consolation. In the first place we will notice that the hand of JEHOVAH-JESUS means His PURPOSE. Turn to Acts iv. 27, 28: "For of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together *for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.*" What the purpose of JEHOVAH has designed for His people in Christ Jesus must be performed in their experience by His gracious hand. See how this is clearly set forth in Eph. i., which chapter contains Paul's description of the Father's mind and will concerning His children in Christ. See verses 5 and 6: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Read from the 9th to the 12th verse: "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ." The Father first trusted Christ by placing His people, their salvation, with all covenant blessings, into His hands from the days of eternity. But the question may be asked, and has been asked a thousand times, May not the purpose of JEHOVAH-JESUS fail in its accomplishment? To this I answer, Yes, if the purpose had aught of the weakness of the question; but this it has not. Mark!

"The work which His goodness began,  
The arm of His strength will complete,  
His promise is 'Yea and Amen,'  
And never was forfeited yet.  
Things future, nor things that are now,  
Not all things below nor above,  
Can make him His purpose forego,  
Or sever my soul from His love."

"*His hands.*" This expresses His POWER. Read Psalm xx. 6: "Now know I that the LORD saveth His anointed: He will hear him from His holy heaven *with the saving strength of His right hand.*" See also Psalm lxxxix. 13: "Thou hast a

mighty arm : strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand." Whenever the hand, or the right hand, of JEHOVAH is mentioned in the Scriptures, it always refers to the display of His power in connection with the mediatorial work of the Surety of the covenant. Sometimes it works in judgment and at other times in mercy. His arm is all-powerful. His right hand is exalted very high. It is high as the covenant and the throne. The decree has gone forth, "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself" (Psalm lxxx. 17). This is the Man who has been made strong by resurrection-power and privilege for the salvation of His Church and people. Of Him it is said in Psalm cx. 1 :—"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." In that precious song of Moses we have a description of the redemption power of Israel's God :—"Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power : Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed to pieces the enemy." With the experience of the resurrection-power of Christ, the Church can sing with David, "The right hand of the LORD is exalted : the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly" (Psalm cxviii. 16). In this lively figure we see the law fulfilled, sin put away, death overcome, hell defeated, God glorified, and His people eternally saved and secure. But look at that glowing description which is given of JEHOVAH'S hand in 1 Chron. xxix. 11—13 : "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty ; for all that is in the heaven, and in the earth is Thine ; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all : *and in Thine hand is power and might ; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.* Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name." We who are experimentally one with David, and are brought to a spiritual understanding of these grand, vast, and glorious truths, that the power of our God will perform His covenant purpose, we rejoice and sing :—

"This God is the God we adore,  
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend,  
His love is as great as His power,  
And neither knows measure nor end.  
'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,  
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home,  
We'll praise Him for all that is past,  
And"—

we will ask him for grace to

"trust Him for all that's to come."

"*His hands.*" These words not only set forth His Purpose and His Power, but His PROVIDENCE also. See how clearly and blessedly Nehemiah declares this in chap. ii. 17, 18 :

"Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire; come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. *Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me.*"

"Good when He gives, supremely good,  
Nor less when He denies;  
E'en crosses, from His sovereign hand,  
Are blessings in disguise."

Job knew this when his wife said unto him, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job. ii. 9, 10). Whatsoever comes to a child of God in the way of good or evil, according to our faint conception, always comes by the hand of JEHOVAH-JESUS. With the spiritual understanding of this, Ryland might well sing,

"Sovereign Ruler of the skies,  
Ever gracious, ever wise;  
All my times are in Thy hand,  
All events at Thy command.  
  
Times of sickness; times of health;  
Times of penury and wealth;  
Times of trial and of grief;  
Times of triumph and relief.  
  
Times the tempter's power to prove;  
Times to taste the Saviour's love;  
All must come, and last, and end,  
As shall please my heavenly Friend."

It matters not whether we have pain or pleasure of body or of mind, adversity or prosperity in our every-day life, foes frowning or friends smiling, they are ours by the pleasure and power of Him who has the treasures of heaven at His disposal, and who holds the keys of hell and of death (Rev. i. 18).

"*His hands*" are full of covenant PROVISION for His people. They display JEHOVAH'S purpose, exercise His power, manage His providence, and dispense His covenant provision. They are full of temporal and spiritual mercies for me. You see this in Psa. civ. 27, 28, which I believe gives a blessed description of Christ's dealings with His people on resurrection-ground: "These wait all upon Thee; that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That Thou givest them they gather: *Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good.*" The opening of His hand signifies the benevolence and liberality of His disposition to His people in Christ Jesus. They are not only blessed with all spiritual blessings, but He never fails to communicate to them the very blessing they experimentally need. The same truth is beautifully expressed in Psa. cxlv. 15, 16: "The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. *Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living*

thing." Here we see a fulness and certainty of covenant provision for a covenant people. If He asks us the question, "Lacked ye anything?" our adoring hearts cry out, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ" (Eph. i. 3). The purpose of JEHOVAH in the hands of Christ is our patrimony, His power our security, His providence our guide, and His provision our supply.

"*His hands.*" In them we delight to see our PROTECTION and PRESERVATION. Let me ask you, what should we do with all the provisions of His grace if His hands were merely opened and we were left to our own way with them? The result would be our squandering or losing the whole. Our weakness and foolishness is such that we could not keep for ourselves the provisions of His love. Whatever His purpose desired, His power executed, or His providence prepared for us, if left to ourselves, we should certainly lose all. But it is our mercy to know that all these, with ourselves, are safely protected and securely preserved in the hands of a precious Christ. The Psalmist knew there was no preservation apart from the hand of his God when he cried, "Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up Thine hand: forget not the humble. Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God: he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. Thou hast seen it; for Thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with Thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art the Helper of the fatherless." Whoever plots mischief against a child of God, or manifests spite against one for whom Christ suffered and died, and upon whom JEHOVAH has conferred His covenant blessings through the Son of His love, will be sure to receive recompense at the hands of Zion's Defender, who will break in pieces every proud oppressor and settle matters with all Zion's spoilers. Is this sufficient for the ever-wanting child of grace? No. New beauties and perfections will be revealed in the person of our ever-adorable Lord to all eternity.

"*His hands.*" The PRESENTATION of the Church before the face of the Father, and her PERFECTION appear in the hands of Christ. See how this is stated in Psa. xlv. 9: "*Upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.*" The bride of Zion's King ever stands with acceptance before the delighted gaze of the Father in the glorious person of her adorable Head and Husband. In His gracious hands the whole election of grace are presented perfect and complete. No stain, imperfection, infirmity, or failure can be found there. The Father looks upon the Son of His love, and beholds the bride in undisturbed oneness with Him in all His ineffable perfections, and there she must abide until that glorious time when sin shall be no more to her, suffering and sorrow shall cease for ever, and in the unclouded glory of her Lord she shall appear unceasingly. Turn with me to Psa. xlviii. 9, 10: "We have thought of Thy loving-kindness,



O God, in the midst of Thy temple. According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth : *Thy right hand is full of righteousness.*" Christ, who is JEHOVAH'S right hand, is righteousness. Whatever He has done is righteousness. What He does is righteousness. Whatever He gives or withholds is in purest righteousness. In all His ways and works righteousness appears and is bestowed by His hands to all those whom He strips of all their fancied meetness for glory. Now look at Psa. xvi. 11 : "Thou wilt show me the path of life ; in Thy presence is fulness of joy ; *at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*" Upon resurrection ground, and in experimental possession of ascension realities, the living children of God enjoy spiritual pleasures which can never be marred. The love of a covenant Father is the joy of their heart. The grace of an unchanging Saviour is the delight of their spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost is the secret of their spiritual life.

"*His hands.*" We shall never be able to discover all the works and bounties of His hands. Look at Psalm xvii. 7, where we see SALVATION revealed in the person of Jesus : "Show Thy marvellous lovingkindness, *O Thou that savest by Thy right hand* them which put their trust in Thee from those that rise up against them." As I am favoured to see my salvation in the hands of Christ, and that it is there for me with eternal glory, so shall I also see the world, the Church, with Satan and my carnal mind, calling into question the reality and genuineness of my faith. I shall be assaulted by all these, and sometimes brought to doubt the reality of every work and movement of grace in me. But there is something very blessed in the fact that salvation was not only completed for me by the hands of Jesus, but will also be wrought in me by the power of His Spirit. In this I see my SAFETY is in the hands of Him who has saved me. Turn to Psalm xxi. 7, 8 : "For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved. Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies : *Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee.*" Is that sufficient? No. His hands are my SECURITY from present and future dangers. The language of Zion's covenant Head is that of every soul in union with Him : "*Into Thine hands I commit my spirit* : Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth" (Psalm xxxi. 5). But while I have salvation, safety, and security, I long for STABILITY, which, blessed be His name, I have, according to that precious statement in verse 15 : "*My times are in Thy hand.*" Oh, how blessed ! Everything I can have in possession, or experience, is in the hand of my Lord, my God, my Head, my Husband, my All in all. What more can I want?

"What from Christ that soul shall sever  
Bound by everlasting bands ?

Once in Him, in Him for ever ;  
 Thus th' eternal covenant stands :  
 None shall pluck thee  
 From the Strength of Israel's hands."

II.—"GOLD RINGS"—What do they indicate? Gold denotes preciousness and perfection. All that I have enumerated, and all that is revealed in God's blessed Word, as held in the hands of Christ for His people, is precious and perfect. Look at JEHOVAH'S purpose, power, providence, provision, and protection, with my salvation, safety, security, and stability! All these are precious to me, and no imperfection can be found in any part of them. Satan may strive his utmost to find a flaw in the person and work of the God-Man, but all his labours are in vain. The Christ of God is impeccable. Look at that glorious declaration in John xiv. 30: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." No weakness, but all power. No flaw in His purpose; no failure in His providence; no lack in His provision; no defect in His protection. All His saints are perfectly saved and safe in Him, according to that precious declaration in John x. 27, 28: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." But mark, not only *gold*, but *gold rings*. Not one ring, but many, to set forth the variety of blessings and consolations which abound by Jesus Christ to all those in blessed and hallowed association and identification with Him. You see this variety and abundance in many portions of the Word to which I have directed your attention of late, in which that expression "*much more*" occurs. Does He give life? He will give it more abundantly (John x. 10). Does He give grace? He will give more grace (James iv. 6). "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). This means grace after grace; heaps upon heaps of grace; grace bestowed the earnest and pledge of future and more copious supplies.

"*Gold rings.*" The ring is perfectly round, has no end, and is a figure of eternity. Every covenant mercy and blessing which the Father committed to the hands of my Saviour and my God for me is eternal. Nothing fleeting or perishing can be found there. But these mercies and blessings, and my experience of them, differ altogether. God's knowledge of the blessings He has treasured up with undisturbed security for me in the Son of His love, and my experience of them, differ as much as darkness does from light, or the gloomiest night to the clearest day. I have but a faint apprehension of what He has laid up for me, nay, I have no apprehension at all, except as He is pleased to reveal His blessings to my waiting and wanting heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. Yet He has taught me that every blessing bestowed upon me in Him has the stamp of eternity upon it—is eternal.

**ETERNAL LIFE!** Look at the portion I quoted to you just now: "I give unto them eternal life" (John x. 28). Turn also to John xvii. 2, 3: "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." The life of God in an elect vessel of mercy can never be destroyed. That is a precious verse by Miss Steele:—

"If my immortal Saviour lives,  
Then my immortal life is sure;  
His Word a firm foundation gives,  
Here let me build, and rest secure."

**ETERNAL REDEMPTION!** The work of His hands for those who are possessed of His life is eternal. The Psalmist declares: "His work is honourable and glorious: and His righteousness endureth for ever" (Psalm cxi. 3). Turn with me to Hebrews v. 8, 9: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered: and being made perfect, *He became the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him.*" You read also in chapter ix., verse 12: "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption for us.*" When Israel's enemies shall be eternally confuted and confounded, "Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation, and shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end" (Isaiah xlv. 17).

**ETERNAL EXCELLENCE!** This brings to our minds that glorious fact spoken by JEHOVAH to His redeemed Church, not to Israel according to the flesh, but to His Church, His bride, concerning her standing before Him throughout a long eternity: "*I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations*" (Isaiah lx. 15). Eternal excellency? Yes. Excellent in the excellencies of her Head and Husband is the Church of the living God. He says to her, "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee" (Isaiah xliii. 4). She is "a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of *her God*" (Isaiah lxii. 3). She is an eternal excellency, and is everlastingly dignified in oneness with a precious Christ. Is this all? No!

**ETERNAL GLORY!** See how the apostle Paul deals out this marvellous truth by way of contrast in 2 Cor. iv. 16—18, and v. 1: "For the which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a

building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

"Eternal life, at His request,  
To every saint is given;  
Safety on earth, and after death  
The plenitude of heaven."

**EVERLASTING LOVE!** Every blessing enjoyed by the Church is the fruit of His everlasting love. Before all worlds He received the Church into His loving hands as His own possession—that possession which caused His hands to be pierced on Calvary's rugged tree, His heart to break with reproach, His soul to be sorrowful even unto death, and His precious blood to flow for its redemption. Every act of His loving hands was an expression of His love and affection. The heart of the weeping prophet was cheered and comforted with that sweet whisper of his gracious Lord, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3). Does the child of God cry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" (Psa. lxxvii. 9). He is held in everlasting remembrance (Psa. cxii. 6). Does the tried and tempted God-fearer mourn because of his darkness? (Isa. l. 10). The LORD shall be his everlasting light (Isa. lx. 19, 20). Does the weary traveller to Zion lament his constant sense of failure? He shall be blessed with everlasting consolation (2 Thes. ii. 16).

**III.—"SET WITH THE BERYL"**—What does that mean? The beryl is a precious stone of a bluish-green colour "which never receives reflection from any other colour or shade, but remains unaffected by contact with other things." This sets forth the spiritual, heavenly, and unchanging nature of the Church in Christ. He has set her as a seal upon His heart, as a seal upon His arm (Song viii. 6). "The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy" (Psa. cxlvii. 11). Again it is said, "For the LORD taketh pleasure in His people; He will beautify the meek with salvation" (Psa. cxlix. 4). Because of His good pleasure, He "hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure" (Psa. cxxxv. 4). In the contemplation of this glorious fact, dear old John Kent might well sing:—

"Hail, sacred day! that shall declare  
The jewels of the Son of God;  
Design'd to deck His crown they were,  
Chosen of old, and bought with blood."

The elect, redeemed, and regenerate people of God are thus described in Mal. iii. 16, 17: "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels" (margin, *special treasure*). The

hands of our most glorious Christ are set and adorned with these precious stones—these matchless brilliants upon whom His heart's affections are eternally fixed. They are so precious to Him as to cause Him to give His life's blood, ay, Himself, and all that He possessed for them. They are the jewels of electing love, redeeming grace, and regenerating mercy. As upon the breastplate of the Jewish high priest the names of the tribes of Israel were seen in the jewels there, so Jesus, our Great High Priest, before the Father's throne,

“ Points to *our* names upon His breast,  
And spreads His wounded hands,”

while the Father sees in them the whole election of grace eternally saved, supported, strengthened, and secured.

“ *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl.*” Art thou a beryl set in the everlasting love of JEHOVAH-JESUS? Art thou a jewel fixed in the unchanging affections of the heavenly Bridegroom? Art thou a precious stone placed in the hand of Zion's Almighty Redeemer? Whatever be thy lot, He will never lose thee, leave thee, or forsake thee, and will teach thee the preciousness of these words of Grant :

“ O Zion afflicted with wave upon wave,  
Whom no man can comfort, whom no man can save :  
With darkness surrounded, by terrors dismay'd,  
In toiling and rowing thy strength is decay'd.

Loud roaring, the billows now nigh overwhelm ;  
But skilful's the Pilot who sits at the helm ;  
His wisdom conducts thee, His power thee defends,  
In safety and quiet thy warfare He ends.

‘ O fearful, O faithless ! ’ in mercy He cries ;  
‘ My promise, My truth, are they light in thy eyes ?  
Still, still I am with thee, My promise shall stand ;  
Through tempest and tossing I'll bring thee to land.

Forget thee I will not, I cannot ; thy name  
Engraved on My heart does for ever remain ;  
The palms of My hands while I look on I see  
The wounds I received when suffering for thee.

I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,  
For thou art most near Me, My flesh and My bones ;  
In all thy distresses thy Head feels the pain ;  
Yet all are most needful ; not one is in vain.

Then trust Me, and fear not ; thy life is secure ;  
My wisdom is perfect, supreme is My power  
In love I correct thee, thy soul to refine,  
To make thee at length in My likeness to shine.”

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S HEART.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING  
AUGUST 31ST, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires."—Song of Solomon  
v. 14.

"**E**VERY word of God is pure," is the testimony of Solomon in Prov. xxx. 5; and for it to be pure in the mind and judgment of mortals, there must of necessity be a pure understanding. To be able to apprehend the mind of God, as given in chaste and holy metaphors, the favoured sinner must possess a discerning power which impure human nature possesses not. An impure mind revels in impure deductions, and cannot appreciate the chaste and the holy. You see this in the statement of the apostle Paul in Titus i. 15: "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Those who are left destitute of the all-cleansing power of the blood of Christ, who know nothing of the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning which purges away all filth and impurity in doctrine and experience, and brings the living children of God into grace-union with the Lord Jesus Christ, are all impure in the sight of infinite purity. If I speak to such within these walls this morning, I must in all faithfulness tell you, that in the words of our text there is nothing pure or profitable for you. For those of you who are left to your carnal judgment and fleshly surmisings there is nothing but condemnation and confusion in such a precious metaphor as this, except God be pleased to communicate to you that Divine nature (2 Peter i. 4) which is pure as Himself, that incorruptible seed which knows nothing of impurity, corruption, or depravity (1 Peter i. 23), that new man of grace which is born of God and cannot sin (1 John iii. 9), which cannot be spoiled, soiled, or sullied by any subtilty or sophistry of Satan, any evil influences which may surround you,

No. 142.—PRICE ONE PENNY.

or any lust or corruption surging and seething within you. All these accursed things will trouble and annoy the living child of God and cause him to bow down before the footstool of sovereign mercy, begging and praying the God of all grace to manifest His favour to one so vile and unworthy. This is a paradox unknown to all but those with whom the secret of the Lord is, and His covenant also to make them know it (Psa. xxv. 14).

May the blessed Spirit guide us this morning into a right judgment in all spiritual things. He can, and does influence the mind of those who are brought into spiritual subjection to Him, and are given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven which are puzzles and paradoxes to all the world beside. It has been our lot to contemplate the beauty of our great and glorious Lord in His sovereignty, purpose, omniscience, fulness, manifestations, communications, and power. Now we seek for fresh discoveries of His beauties and excellencies in the simile of my text, which appears, to refined reason, not quite the thing to read in a mixed assembly. Yet, couching beneath these mystic words a fund of spiritual instruction is found, which causes the heart of the Spirit-taught child of God to bound with delight, and to rejoice in blessed and hallowed oneness with Him whose love, grace, pity, and compassion are revealed therein. We will look at the words according to the order in which the Holy Ghost has been pleased to place them.

I.—“*His belly.*” What are we to understand by this? It is a metaphorical expression conveying spiritual truth to the heart of the Church of Christ. Many have been the suggestions and surmisings enunciated concerning it. One is, that it simply refers to the human nature of our Lord and Master in its purity, preciousness, and perfection; but it is always well to seek for a solution of a Scriptural difficulty in the words of the same writer who states it. I love to look at these words, “*His belly,*” in the light of another expression in this chapter, which, to my mind, expresses their true meaning, and opens up to us the love of a covenant God to His covenant people, or the affection of the spiritual and heavenly Bridegroom to His bride the Church. You will find the expression in the words of the bride in ver. 4: “My Beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and *my bowels* were moved for Him.” This is exactly the same word in the original with that given at the commencement of our text. Therefore, it will be mine this morning to lay aside the word given in our translation and look at the precious one referred to, “*His bowels,*” His heart. Dr. Watts knew something of the preciousness of this when he wrote those lines,—

“With joy we meditate the grace  
Of our High Priest above;  
His heart is filled with tenderness,  
His bowels melt with love.

Touch'd with a sympathy within,  
 He knows our feeble frame ;  
 He knows what sore temptations mean,  
 For He has felt the same."

The word "*bowels*" in the Bible has a different signification altogether to that with which our minds have been associated. It invariably means the heart and its surroundings which are easily affected by love or hatred, joy or grief, desire or disdain. So our text would read, "*His heart is as bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires.*" In this I read the love and affection Christ has to His people. He loves and delights to bless His bride. He loves and desires to have her near to Him in blessed and hallowed communion. He loves and determines to bring her to the enjoyment of Himself, His kingdom, and His glory. He delights to supply all her need, according to the Father's riches in glory. and bring her to experience the same emotions toward Him that He has toward her. Whatever office Christ held in covenant with the Father must be shared by His bride. For whatever blessings He holds for her He will create desires in the waiting hearts of His people, which the Father cannot and will not resist or gainsay, because it is part of His plan, and He has bound Himself by the most solemn obligations to fulfil the desires of His heart in their experience.

"*His heart.*" Here I see His delight in His bride from all eternity, His determination to save her from all her sins and sufferings, and His desire for her society. His delight, determination, and desire shall never fail. For His elect people He has provided a place in His loving bosom in which they shall ever abide, free from all sin, safe from all danger, and secure from all assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil. I see all this blessedly set forth in this glorious hymn of dear old John Kent :

" 'Twas with an everlasting love  
 That God His own elect embrac'd,  
 Before He made the worlds above,  
 Or earth on her huge columns plac'd.  
 Long ere the sun's refulgent ray  
 Primeval shades of darkness drove,  
 They on His sacred bosom lay,  
 Lov'd with an everlasting love.  
 Then in the glass of His decrees,  
 Christ and His bride appear'd as one ;  
 Her sin, by imputation, His,  
 Whilst she in spotless splendour shone."

In the eyes of the Father the bride stands unceasingly arrayed in the glorious perfections of her Head and Husband. Even when Adam fell, and she fell in him from her state of earthly perfection and privilege, she fell not from her standing in Christ, and shall never fall from that state of spiritual perfection with which she was blessed in Him before the worlds were framed. We may look still further into this glorious truth.



When each member of the mystical body of Christ was brought into actual existence upon earth, and was called into creature being, born in sin, shapen in iniquity, going astray from the womb, speaking lies, only evil and always evil as the true descendants of Adam the first, even then, in the glass of the Father's decrees, and in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, they stood without fault,

"From wrinkle and from blemish free."

Underlying that wonderful parenthesis of JEHOVAH'S, called TIME, His purposes of love remain undisturbed, and the purity and perfection of the Church remain intact. Satan may roar and sin may ravage the natural creation, but nothing can mar her fair beauty, nothing can sully her glorious perfection, nothing can spoil her completeness in the eyes of Him with whom she has to do. Thus we see the affection of her God, the love of her Husband, Saviour, Friend, and Companion, remain ever the same, unchanging and unchanged. In time, according to JEHOVAH'S decree and determination, every member of the Church is born to be born again, and brought to a true knowledge of its corruption and depravity, its waywardness in wandering from Him, and its enmity against Him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7). Brought to the knowledge of such an awful state, the awakened sinner pursues his anxious inquiry, Can God be ever the same in love, affection, compassion, and pity, toward one so vile, so base, and abominable? To all such spiritual seekers He is ever the same. There is no change in Him, according to His own precious testimony by Malachi, to His people, "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

"*His heart.*" For further discoveries of the love of Christ's heart look at that series of metaphors given in Ezekiel xvi., in which the Church is described in her natural filth and corruption. Begin at the 5th verse:—"None eye pitied thee to do any of these unto thee"—that is to say, to wash thee, suckle thee, or clothe thee: "to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." Read the 8th verse: "Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love." What time is that? It is the time of the Spirit's convincing power, when the awakened sinner feels and knows God's judgment concerning him, according to Paul's declaration in Rom. iii. 19: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may

become guilty before God;" or, according to the margin, "*subject to the judgment of God.*" What is God's judgment concerning me in my birth, constitution, and practice? That I am a sinner vile and base, deserving hell-fire, and that left to myself I can do nothing but sin, and wander to the depths of eternal condemnation. When all thoughts of human dignity and desert are scattered to the winds, and self-sufficiency is broken to shivers by the thunder-bolts of God's law, when a poor sinner is left face to face with a just and holy God, standing, as it were, upon the brink of the pit of eternal destruction, he is satisfied to take God's Word as it is spiritually communicated, and say Amen thereto, though it seals his condemnation. When I am brought to see myself in the light of JEHOVAH'S perfections, I see myself too filthy to live, too sinful to die. I see, and confess myself to be such that even some of you have come to the conclusion that I exaggerate. But God knows that I do not. Such is the overwhelming sense I have of my corruption and depravity, that oftentimes I tremble in every step I take into this pulpit, and wonder how it is that persons with any sense of respectability and propriety can come and listen to so vile a worm as I feel myself to be. But, what a miracle of sovereign mercy to know that sinners are privileged to listen to the news of God's salvation from the lips of those who feel themselves to be but poor polluted worms. Glory be to our covenant God, we are privileged to listen to the unfoldings of Christ's heart of love, to the mysteries of redeeming grace, to the opening of the heights of covenant favour, to the astounding declaration that our covenant God in Christ passed by the pure, holy, spotless angels, and came down to the very holes of dung-hill worms to save them, and take them to Himself, that they might inherit with Him the throne of glory, and sit there with the princes of His people. The very thought of this humbles me to the dust, and causes me to know what that means, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). This is a time of thorough self-abnegation, self-renunciation, and self-loathing, but also for the manifestation of a dear Redeemer's love, and for the moving of the bowels of Divine compassion. But was there ever a time when JEHOVAH-JESUS' compassions moved not? Never since an elect vessel of mercy inhabited the regions of sin and sorrow. God has His own time for the revelation of this precious fact to the heart of His own, when He will cause the favoured one, as my soul knoweth right well, to praise and adore the riches of His grace. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest Mine." Then, after a description of the adornings by the graces of His Spirit, He says at the 13th verse: "Thus

wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD." This appears to be too good to be true to any mind but that brought by covenant favour into the sweet enjoyment of the purpose and pleasure of God concerning it in the Son of His love.

*"His heart."* Wherever an elect vessel of mercy can be found, there the heart of Christ goes forth. His love is such that whatever be the state of His bride, He will make a way to her. The fashionable way of preaching is to declare that Jesus Christ came into the world to make a way in which sinners may come to God; but it is our mercy to know that Christ is the Father's way to the hearts of His children. He came down before He went up. "Now that He ascended, what is it that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all things, that He might fill all things" (Eph. iv. 9, 10). When He took upon Him to deliver His Church from sin, death, and hell, He did not abhor the lowest spots of her sin, shame, and suffering. Through difficulties and obstacles apparently insurmountable He made a way, in which His Father comes with Him by the power of His blessed Spirit to the very hells of filth and corruption, to the dens of depravity and damnation, to the haunts of violence and villany, to the steeps of vice and corruption, to deliver His own elect therefrom. Like a pure bright sunbeam in a dark and filthy hovel, He made a way to communicate His purity to those in eternal union with Himself. His love, compassion, and pity, are such that wherever His bride went there He Himself must go. In bonds of everlasting love He is wedded to her, and knows no divorce court in which He will ever be found seeking a separation from her. It matters not how treacherously she may depart from Him, He will not put her away. See Jer. iii. 12—14. It matters not how wanton, adulterous, lewd, or filthy she may become, His love to her cannot be affected thereby. There is no change in our Emmanuel's love, no alteration in our heavenly Bridegroom's affection, no mutation in that compassion which ever dwells in Him toward the objects of His Father's choice, and His own unceasing concern.

*"His heart."* Look through the Scriptures of truth and contemplate the affections of a Three-in-One JEHOVAH, either in the person of the Father toward His children, in the person of the Bridegroom toward His bride, or in the person of the Comforter to His companions; they are ever the same. Are the children wayward and bent upon wandering from a loving

Father? This will produce no change whatever in His love to them, while the manifestation of that love will be marvellously intensified. Does a child of His wander? Will He leave it in sin and folly to roam to the abode of eternal despair? No! He pursues it with looks of fondest affection, words of sovereign power, and expressions of the deepest compassion. You see this throughout the whole of that glorious allegory, the book of the prophet Hosea. Look at chap. vi., where He is speaking to His Ephraim, who sees his rottenness, is oppressed in judgment, and sick, and wounded. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Notice those two words, "*your goodness*." Had Ephraim any goodness? Not naturally. Mark well the marginal rendering, "*your mercy, or kindness*." This he experienced by Divine communication and spiritual experience; but goodness, mercy, and kindness, spiritually communicated and experienced, are oftentimes like the morning cloud and early dew—soon gone. That is just like me; one moment I am blessed with the sweet realisation of yearnings of the bowels of my God over me, and the next I am wandering after natural things and calling into question the reality of the love He has manifested, and the life He has communicated. Read chap. vii. 8, 11: "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Ephraim is also like a silly dove without heart." Again in chap. viii. 9, &c.: "Ephraim hath hired lovers. Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin." Come now to chap. xi. 8, 9: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man." In the face of all Ephraim's wandering, rebellion, and departure from God he cannot be given up. Have we any fathers here this morning? Some of you have watched over those who are near and dear to you as life itself, though the youngsters do not always think so. You have sighed and cried to the God of heaven for them, and the silent watches of the night have borne witness to the yearnings of your bowels of affection for them, and your anxiety, care, and concern. Yet all this has been requited with waywardness, disobedience, and insolence. Where is your wayward one? He may be not very far from you. He may be at the Antipodes. Can you discard him? or, to coin a phrase, Can you unchild him? You know you cannot. Sometimes in the sternness of the parental spirit you have acted in righteousness without regard to the feelings of your child, but the next moment you have been just as soft and tender as God alone can make you. At such a time you

would carry the wanderer to your home and to your heart ; but a mysterious providence seems to thwart your design of love. Yet, as assuredly as you belong to Him, who, like as a father pitieth his children, pitieth them that fear Him, and He has made you to experience the yearnings of His bowels of comparison, He will cause all your cares and anxieties to work together for your good, and for His glory. The day may come round when the child of your heart may come again from the land of the enemy to possess his own border of spiritual peace and contentment prepared for him by a covenant God in Christ. I speak thus to give a faint illustration of the unfailing compassions of our gracious God in Christ toward His own. I scarcely ever read Hosea xi. without feelings of the deepest emotion in the presence of Him who has borne so long with my manners in this wilderness world. But look at that gracious resolve of the wayward and wandering Ephraim, recorded in the last chapter and eighth verse : "What have I to do any more with idols ?" JEHOVAH says, "I have heard him, and observed him." Ephraim says, "I am like a green fir tree." Plenty of foliage, but no fruit. All his wisdom turned into folly ; all his strength reduced to helplessness. Listen to the gracious declaration of his God : "From Me is thy fruit found." Did you not notice that precious portion I read for you this morning—a portion which I cannot read too often ? I allude to Jer. xxxi. 20, which I read not as a question, but as a Divine affirmation : "Ephraim is My dear son ; he is a pleasant child, for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still : *therefore My bowels are troubled for him ;* I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD."

"*His heart.*" Whose heart ? The heart of Him of whom we can sing,

" Past suffering now, the tender heart  
Of Jesus on His Father's throne,  
In all our sorrows bears a part,  
And feels them as He felt His own."

High in the heights of glory, before His Father's throne, He ever stands on the behalf of His bride, His spouse, His wife, His eternally loved one. To the Father His desires for her are communicated, while to her He communicates them by the power of the Holy Ghost. Look at the various cases which occurred during the lifetime of our Lord and Master upon earth in which He was moved with compassion and manifested His love toward the objects of sin, guilt, infirmity, and shame. Wherever He appears, His compassions change not. As He looked upon those in necessity and distress, we are told again and again, He had compassion upon them. See Matt. ix. 36 : "But when He saw the multitudes, *He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted,* and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." You remember the young man who came to Him,

running, kneeling, asking, but asking in a legal spirit, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Did the Master denounce him for his legality? Did He chase him away because of his free-will propensities? No. Look at this precious declaration: "*Then Jesus beholding him, loved him*" (Mark x. 21). Some would have us believe that Christ's love to this young man was merely that of human sympathy. I do not believe in any such thing. Away with such a false notion as mutable love in the person of my Saviour. "*He loved him,*" and, you may depend upon it, He loved the spirit of legality out of Him by the revelation of His sovereign grace, unchanging affection, and everlasting love. Mark well the loving way in which He ever dealt with His disciples in all their ignorances and infirmities. The more He taught them, the more they displayed their want of teaching. Read that precious chapter, the fourteenth of John, where you will see Him cheering and comforting His disciples, to whom He had given one heart and one way. As Thomas, Philip, and Judas speak, they manifest forgetfulness, ignorance, and negligence. How does He deal with them for all this? Just the same, with gentleness, tenderness, and compassion, He meets every difficulty and answers every doubt. Did He at any time give a command to a disciple? As surely as He did, that disciple would disobey at one time or other. But there are those who can boast and brag of their obedience to Divine commands, but, depend upon it, such accursed boasting belongs to the flesh. I say again, whenever He gives an absolute command to any of His creatures, it is to manifest the creature's helplessness, and display His own power. Shall I give you an illustration of this? Come with me and in spirit visit the lonely groves of dark Gethsemane. He said unto the disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." He took His favoured three, and in sorrow and heaviness said unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them"—watching and praying? No, but—"asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done. And He came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh He to His disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest." Do you think, if our precious Christ had been the whipper and castigator He is

hath not *seen*. The natural ear hath not *heard*. heart hath never *received* "the things which God for them that love God."

THE EYE is first presented to us in this state. When we consider this in connection with the ten to, and the place where they dwelt, we the apostle quoting this portion of Divine proof of human inability to understand Divine truths were an artistic, accomplished, and well-instructed in the arts and sciences. Architecture met the eye on every hand. Grandeur and even now amid the ruins of the place. If cultivated and fastidious, we may well imagine of the heart would be without the constraining power of God the ever-blessed Spirit! But the chapter before us points out the creature-hum exalting, and Spirit-honouring truth, that the God's mind and will to His people in Christ Jesus by Himself, and that to His own nature (2 Peter heart of his own bestowing (Ezek. xxxvi. standing given (1 John v. 20), which He implants of elect vessels of mercy. We see this in the apostle in the 6th verse: "Howbeit we speak them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of the princes of this world, that come to nought the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the which God ordained before the world unto none of the princes of this world knew; for they would not have crucified the Lord no spiritual appetite, taste, or desire for in Christ Jesus. There was no beauty that they should desire Him, and they should be drawn by it. Therefore more, the artistic production with these their minds were was centred in earthly which is in strict accordance devilish things. Let and voluptuous as the the appellation, A lowest specimen some little idea so elegant, and and intellect The natural hath

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represented to be by free-willers, He would have manifested such compassion and sympathy to His weak, weary, and disobedient disciples? No. He told them to watch. They fell asleep. He sympathised with them, and said, "Sleep on now." Have we any sleepy ones here this morning? I do not allude to physical sleep, for I know there is spiritual napping when the eyes are wide open. It is your mercy and mine to know by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the declarations of God's written Word that, sleeping or waking, His love is ever the same.

*"His heart."* We who are spiritually taught cannot fail to notice the compassion and love of the Spirit of Christ. There are some portions of God's blessed Word in connection with which we are met with the taunt: "You Calvinists are afraid to tackle them." To the taunt I give the lie direct, for I feel that I am not afraid of any Scripture. I am ever willing to acknowledge my ignorance of any portion upon which the Lord has not graciously thrown His light for my heart's experience. It was this spiritual honesty that endeared to my heart poor West of Winchelsea. I remember on one occasion he wrote to me concerning John v. 27: "And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man," when he acknowledged his lack of light, saying, "I have no light upon that text. I am as blind as a bat." Here is one of the portions: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30). Tell me, I do not like that? It is my joy to know that I am sealed to the full redemption day, that I am set as a seal upon the arm and heart of Zion's Beloved. This is a sealing that neither sin, Satan, suffering, nor all the combined forces of earth and hell can break. The seal is closer than the wax is to the paper; it is as close as the impression to the wax. If I am sealed to the day of redemption, the covenant command will come home to me by covenant power: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." How can I grieve Him? By being drawn aside as a vendor of linsey-woolsey, fleshly free-will; by claiming any of the honour of my salvation which belongs only to the Christ whom He delights to glorify; by thinking even for a moment that I am a co-operator in the slightest degree in the work of Jesus for me or His own gracious work in me. I shall grieve Him if I am found speaking against the person, standing, privilege, or character of any dear child of God whom He loves with an everlasting love, who is the purchase of a dear Redeemer's blood, and the fruit of His bitter and unparalleled sufferings. As He melts my heart with love Divine, I fear to grieve Him. I loathe myself at the very thought. I long for His witnessing to my spirit that I am born of God, and for His revelation of the Father's unsearchable and ineffable affection to the Son, of the Son's devotion to the Father, and of the delight He has in

the will of the Father, the work of the Son, and the welfare of the Church. The love of the Divine Three is revealed in the desire and determination to save, which is communicated to the heart by the power of Christ's Spirit in His own good time, causing the heart in blessed oneness of spirit to confess with good old John Kent:—

“ Preserved in Jesus when  
My feet made haste to hell ;  
And there should I have gone,  
But Thou dost all things well ;  
Thy love was great, Thy mercy free,  
Which from the pit deliver'd me.”

Here I see the bowels, the heart, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to His own and to me.

“*Bright ivory.*” Ivory naturally is not bright, but is susceptible of a very fine polish. To our natural understandings there is nothing bright or beautiful in the person, love, or affection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And even after regeneration our carnal minds will question His right to love whom He will—that is, some of Adam's race and not all. Carnal reason will object to distinguishing love which takes the elect and carries them to glory, and leaves the reprobate to wander to the depths of eternal despair. There are terrible reckonings at times in the mind of the true-born child of God in respect to His eternal and irrevocable choice of His people. One child in my family is brought unasked to bow beneath the sceptre of sovereign love, while another for whom I have prayed and groaned is left without the restraints of JEHOVAH'S grace. Why should this be? my rebellious nature asks. The ivory appears not bright; but when I am brought to see God's Christ in God's light, and to know and feel that He has loved me in spite of myself, the ivory is bright indeed. This metaphor denotes preciousness, purity, and perfection. It speaks of the love of Christ as fair, firm, and faithful. That love is so *precious* that a price cannot be put upon it. It is far above all rubies and riches. The love of Christ is so *pure* as not to be influenced by the goodness or badness of the creature. It knows nothing of envy. As it is shed abroad in the heart it begets love to Him in return, and love to His brethren in whom His image and Spirit are discovered. The love of Christ is *perfect*. It is not like ours, for we are—

“ Sometimes sweet and sometimes sour,  
Brisk and dull in half an hour.”

Half an hour? With me it is more like half a minute. The love of our Jesus is not fickle and fanciful, but firm and faithful. It is that perfect love of which John writes in his 1st epistle, iv. 17, 18: “Herein is *love with us* made perfect.” This is the love of the covenant Three. That we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." Many of God's loved ones look at this, and are troubled because their love is not perfect; but their trouble is removed when they are brought to experience the perfection of love as shed abroad in their heart by the Holy Ghost. Then they apprehend something of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge (Eph. iii. 18, 19). Then sins are cast to the winds, Satan is cast down, fear is cast out, and the eternally-loved one sits at the feet of incarnate Love, and nestles in the bosom of unchanging affection.

"*Bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*" What is a sapphire? It is a transparent jewel, brilliant and beautiful, of a pure sky blue colour. Read Exodus xxiv., where you will see Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, standing before the Lord in the holy mount without fear or amazement. How was this? The secret lay in "*the altar under the hill*" (verse 4) and "*the blood of the covenant*" (verse 8). These seventy-four were sinners indeed, yet here they stood free from all sin. "And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness." This denotes the heavenly and spiritual glory conferred upon His Church by Christ Jesus. In His purity and perfection she ever stands. As the sapphire and precious stones were seen fitly set and firmly fixed in the breastplate of Aaron the high priest, so all the jewels of election love are seen by the Father shining in the affections of their great King-Priest. In Him they are feasted with everlasting love and irresistible power. Turn to Isa. liv. 11, 12. God says to His afflicted, tempest-tossed, and comfortless Church, "*I will lay thy foundations with sapphires.*" Here we see God's Christ going down to the depths of all His Church's necessities, and laying a good foundation for her hope and faith which can never fail. In Ezekiel i. 26 the throne of God is represented as a sapphire stone. In this we see His sovereignty revealed in His love. His belly, His bowels, His heart, His love are precious, pure, perfect, and His saints can never be removed from them. As this is spiritually known and felt, and the favoured sinner is brought by the heavenly Bridegroom into His chambers of love to be glad and rejoice in Him, the heart will bound with the joy of JEHOVAH, while the mouth will sing:—

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,  
And my Beloved is mine!  
He brings a poor vile sinner  
Into His 'house of wine':  
I stand upon His merit,  
I know no other stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth  
In Emmanuel's land."

May He add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S LEGS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 7TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold."—Song of Solomon v. 15.

UNDERNEATH the metaphors and figures of God's most Holy Word treasures of spiritual knowledge and instruction are discovered by the Spirit-taught family, but are hidden from the view of the worldling and the self-sufficient pietist. They are found in seasons of necessity, want, suffering, and sorrow, ordained in covenant purpose and brought about by covenant power (Acts i. 7), when the bounties, blessings, and benefits brought to light, will be received with eagerness and thankfulness, and appreciated by adoring and grateful hearts. It is of God's rich mercy that we know and prize those precious lines by Dr. Watts,—

"Blessings abound where'er He reigns,  
The pris'ner leaps to loose His chains,  
The weary find eternal rest,  
And all the sons of want are blest."

These are the sons of God who experience spiritual want as created by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. It is the delight of the blessed Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and of the fulness of covenant provision, which lie hidden in secret and sacred spots of Divine inspiration, and show them to the Father's eternally-loved children, the Bridegroom's favoured bride, and His own living subjects. Here I would ask the question, Why are we here this morning? or, Why do I stand in this spot to open my lips in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost to speak well of His name and exalt Him very high? I am one of those who cannot do anything else, because He has borne with my manners in the wilderness these many years, has patiently dealt with me

in the face of the enmity I bore to Him, and the incorrigibility of my carnal mind since first He revealed Himself to me. I have forgotten Him again and again, yet He is ever mindful of me, forgives all mine iniquities, and crowns me with loving-kindness and tender mercy. He causes His temporal mercies to surround me, spreads a table before me every morning, provides for me at every step of my wilderness journey, gives me sweet and blessed intimations of His care and concern over me, has carried me in His arms of love to this spot, and has anointed my lips to sound forth the glory of His grace in the salvation, preservation, and glorification of His covenant people. How can I do aught else but speak well of the name of so kind and so loving a God? But why are we here this morning? Not simply to have our natural ears pleased with the songs of praise ascending from our lips, nor to listen to the concentration of portions of Scripture to a text, nor to be entertained with the declarations of a poor mortal; but to hear the voice of Him who speaks from heaven, whose words are life and love, and which, when communicated, inspire the hearts of those who are eternally cared for by Him with sweet light and liberty. We are here this morning seeking to know something more of the beauties, bounties, and blessings abounding in Zion's King and Lord, and to learn and experience more of His patient grace, and of His marvellous compassion to us in all our weaknesses and infirmities, His pity to us in our necessities, His forbearance with us in all our waywardness and ingratitude, with the suitability of all His purposes, and His faithfulness to all the promises He made to the Father on our behalf before the worlds were framed. We are here hoping to experience the earnest of our inheritance which was brought home to our hearts in the day of His resurrection-power. We are here with desires, not simply to be saved, but that He will do with us according to His sovereign purpose, and lead us in those pleasant and painful, yet profitable paths which He from all eternity prepared for us to walk in, and in which He will be abundantly glorified. Thus privileged, we will seek a little instruction and comfort from this precious metaphor. May God the ever-blessed Spirit favour us with His grace and guidance, and enable me to set before you that which I solemnly believe to be His mind concerning them.

"His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold."

We have been privileged to meditate upon many of the personal beauties and graces of our adorable King and Lord.

"*His head*" denotes His sovereign sway,

"*His locks*," His purposes display;

"*His eyes*" reveal His faithful care,

"*His cheeks*" preserve from dark despair;

"*His lips*" drop words of truth and grace,

"*His hands*" preserve His chosen race;

"*His heart*" o'erflows with fondest love,  
 "*His legs*," His firmness fully prove.

"*His legs*." What is the truth couched beneath this striking metaphor? Much speculation has been rife since these words were written, as to their hidden and spiritual meaning. Jewish learning and lore would lead our minds away from Jesus altogether. Rabbinical rubbish would drag our thoughts into a labyrinth, out of which the sovereign power of God the Holy Ghost alone could extricate us. The fathers, so called, would confuse us in a mass of mysterious muddle. I hate that ecclesiastical term, *fathers*. Who were these fathers? You know I have often insisted from this place that a father ought to be the object of respect and veneration in the eyes and estimation of his children. I hate that spirit, too often seen in youngsters, which claims the possession of all the wisdom in existence, and imputes all the folly to the old folk. I love to see the hoary head adorned with wisdom acquired in the school of painful and profitable experience, and blessed with judgment, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, so as to be able to impart counsel with discretion. But if you wish to fill your heads with error, folly, and superstition, you may consult the *fathers* as defined by Romanists and Anglicans. With them you will find the veriest nonsense that was ever palmed upon the poor dupes of Christendom. Here we have nothing to do with them. We can manage very well without them. Our only and infallible touchstone is God's written Word expounded by the Spirit of His Christ. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah viii. 20). All true, faithful preaching of God's Gospel, which is by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Peter i. 12), is sure to lead the minds of God's children higher than the pulpit and the preacher, away from the so-called fathers to JEHOVAH Himself. It was the delight of the apostle Paul to direct the mind of those to whom he was writing away from himself, and from those who were apostles before him (Gal i. 17), to his great and glorious Head in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden from His elect and redeemed people, and it is my constant desire to lead your minds away from myself, and from everything that may emanate from me, to the one grand source of spiritual knowledge, and to His gracious Spirit, the only Communicator of heavenly instruction to those who are learners indeed. If we look at our text in the light of religious or ecclesiastical commentaries, we shall find such light to be spiritual darkness, and shall be led away from the legs of Christ altogether. We are asked not to look at *His legs*, but at the garment which covered the thighs of the Jewish high priest. We are told that this garment was formed of pure white six-fold threads, which provided a stiff, firm covering for the legs of the high priest, and was beautifully

edged or fringed with gold. But it is not mine to lead you to any such fantastic conclusions in reference to the metaphor of the text. I desire, in humble dependence upon Him who has placed me here, to direct your minds to His mind upon the subject, that we may see, know, and feel as our own, the special features of Christ as He is pleased and delighted to meet us in our necessities, performing His Father's will, accomplishing His own good pleasure, and causing us to bless, praise, and adore the name of our covenant-keeping God.

*"His legs."* These denote firmness and strength. You will see this in Solomon's description of the human body in Eccles. xii. 1—7: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, *and the strong men shall bow themselves.*" These strong men are the legs, which bear, support, and carry the whole body. Look at the text in the light of this, and with spiritual intelligence we see the Lord Jesus Christ bearing and upholding all things for His people. It is He who supports, sustains, and maintains everything in the exact order and position arranged and settled by the Father before all worlds for His own glory and for the good of His own Church and people. Here I would ask you a question: "Why did God create this earth of ours?" Geologists will tell you that it was created as a field for the gratification of their speculative propensities and for the display of creative wisdom and power. But that will not do for us. I was one day passing through the market-place at Oldham with dear old James Nuttall, when he quietly asked the question: "Why did God create this earth?" Before I could reply he as quietly answered the question thus: "Only to build a Church thereon, in which He will be everlastingly worshipped and glorified." Do you not agree with the old man? I do. The only reason why JEHOVAH formed the earth, with all its beauties and adornments, with all the sweet spots upon which the natural eye lingers with pleasure and delight, with all the riches of its mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, was for the display of His electing, redeeming, regenerating, and glorifying love. After a glorious declaration of the sovereignty of JEHOVAH, Paul, in a rhapsody of spiritual delight, declares: "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 36). See how unmistakably this is declared in Rev. iv. 11: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Do notice those two words, *"are"* and *"were."* Not only *were*, but *are* created. I have told you several times of the saying of one,

that the preservation of all things is a continual creation in the hands of the great Creator and Preserver of all things. My preservation is a continuous proof of the almighty power of my God. It was the knowledge of this caused Nebuchadnezzar to say: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan. iv. 35). Scripture after Scripture can be produced to show that the strength and omnipotence of our Lord Jesus Christ was displayed in the act of creation, and is still seen in its preservation. Turn with me to Heb. i. 1—3: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds. Who being the Brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, *and upholding all things by the word of His power*, when He by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." There we see the Christ of God, your Friend and mine, bearing, upholding, and sustaining all created things for the sake of His Church. The apostle dealt out the same glorious truth in Col. i. 16, 17: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." It is by His power and might that all things are held together. It is by His strength alone that all solid things retain their power of adhesion and crumble not into dust. It is by Him alone that the particles of which this pulpit are composed are held together. It is by His power that those seats retain their stability for your ease and comfort this morning. It is by His power alone that bread assumes its consistency for our natural sustenance and nourishment. Yes, it is by His power that our bodies retain their form, comeliness, and strength. If all this be true in nature, what must be the spiritual mysteries couched beneath them? Now, I am one of those who fully believe that God's children are a truly spiritual people. They are blessed with spiritual understandings and discernment. I know that the natural religionist can only come to natural conclusions in respect to the truths of God's most Holy Word. For instance, the Ritualist must see natural or baptismal water in John iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The Romanist sees nothing but the real body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in John vi. 53: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." And, though the Saviour declared, "My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My



servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence" (John xviii. 36), yet the corrupt Millennarian is on the look out for an earthly and worldly kingdom. But spiritual minds require spiritual provision. The Spirit-taught child of God, in searching the written Word, can come to none but spiritual conclusions. The God he worships is a Spirit (John iv. 24). The new nature he possesses is spiritual and Divine (2 Pet. i. 4). The words of Christ which sustain and cheer him are spirit and life (John vi. 63). "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Thus, in every natural place I enjoy, and in every natural comfort I experience, I desire and pray to know what is the spiritual blessing God has provided for me therein. When I see Christ as the Creator, Upholder, and Sustainer of the old creation which will exist until the last elect vessel of mercy is caught up to glory, I want to know what are the new creation benefits abounding to me thereby. For, mark this: the old creation must perish and pass away; but the new creation will survive the general conflagration. The new creature in Christ Jesus shall live and abide amidst everlasting burnings (Isa. xxxiii. 14, 15). You can see and sing this in that precious declaration of the Moravian Count Zinzendorf:

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,  
With joy shall I lift up my head."

When fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites, the elect, redeemed, and living children of God shall dwell with the devouring fire, and with the everlasting burnings which shall prove to be the unceasing ruin of the reprobate.

"*His legs.*" In this we see the strength and power of Christ to bear up the everlasting covenant of JEHOVAH'S grace, and everything contained therein. Just think of this glorious fact! God's covenant of free and indefectible grace, with all its blessings, bounties, benefits, mercies, privileges, and immunities, kept and preserved intact. All these are preserved by Him and cannot be affected by sin, Satan, or by all the combinations of hell. Look at the glories of the covenant as revealed in Eph. i. 3, 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him." The Lord Jesus Christ is here seen as the Conservator, Sustainer, and Upholder of the covenant, with all its blessings, and all the persons interested therein. To this covenant the Father is ever mindful, and to it He has ever respect in His dealings with His children. By it He has bound Himself to a course of unceasing blessing to His people. The very thought of this is sufficient to make the

heart and lips exclaim, "*It is almost too good to be true.*" In Christ all the blessings of grace are held with undisturbed security for the whole election of grace, and cannot be touched by their sins, Satan's malignity, or the world's enmity. The upholding and preserving of these covenant blessings is wholly by Himself. He admits no partner in this business. The ark of the covenant, in ancient days, must be borne by the priests, and when a new cart and milch kine were provided by man for its conveyance, God's displeasure was manifested, "and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD" (1 Sam. vi. 7—14). You see the same in David's days, though God ordained that the priest should bear the ark, yet busy men must provide a new cart and oxen for its removal. Now all this fleshly care and preparation ended in discomfiture and the death of Uzzah (2 Sam. vi. 3—10). God's ark of the covenant must not be carried upon a cart of human manufacture, nor drawn by oxen of man's providing. Christ, as our only Priest, is the Bearer of the ark of the covenant, ay, of the covenant and all its contents. He will carry and bear His own covenant blessings to whom He will, and as He will. If ecclesiastical confederacies or religious associations claim this as the right or privilege of mere mortals, it matters not who they may be, whether highly taught, deeply experienced, or skilful in the written Word, the moment the eye turns from the Lord Jesus to one of the oxen of His own providing, that very moment, Ichabod is Israel's lot, and the glory of JEHOVAH in its spiritual manifestation has departed from the place. Blessed be God, His Christ is the Bearer and Upholder of all covenant blessings and glories to His people.

"*His legs.*" The legs of a man carry the whole body. Christ, in His glorious omnipotence, bears, carries, sustains all the persons of God's elect, all the members of His mystical body, every one of those toward whom the Father has designs of love, mercy, and compassion. He took them to His loved embrace as the Father's gift, and His heart's delight before the foundation of the world. This you see in that glorious chapter, John xvii. In the sixth verse He says, "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." Again at the twenty-fourth verse He demands, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Mark that! "*They also whom Thou hast given Me.*" It is a glorious, soul-humbling, and soul-exalting fact, that from the days of eternity a precious Christ, as the Head and Representative of grace, held up His Church and people to the full view of His Father, without sin, fault, or flaw. Throughout all time He bears them up, however vile, filthy, or abominable they may be in their own, or the world's estimation. By His gracious power they are borne up and kept from falling

into hell. See how blessedly this is set before us in the typical wanderings of Israel in the wilderness, as stated in Deut. i. 31 : "And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that *the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bare his son*, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place." Are the sheep of His flock weak and weary? Upon His powerful shoulders He bears them (Luke xv. 5). Are the lambs cold and shivering? He will gather them with His arm, and carry them in His bosom (Isa. xl. 11).

"My Shepherd's bosom bears each lamb  
O'er rock, and waste, and wild ;  
The object of that love I am,  
And carried like a child."

Are old pilgrims tired and tottering? He comforts them with His gracious promise : "Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, *which are borne by Me from the belly, which are carried from the womb*. And even to your old age I am He : and *even to hoar hairs will I carry you : I have made, and I will bear ; even I will carry, and will deliver you*" (Isa. xlii. 3, 4).

"*His legs*." Here we are brought to consider the suretyship sufferings of our adorable Head and Husband. All the sins of all God's people from the beginning to the end of time were laid upon His sinless head and borne by Him into the land of everlasting forgetfulness. See how the prophet Isaiah states this : "All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 6). Not one of the sins of the whole flock was wanting when the Shepherd was smitten upon the accursed tree of Calvary. Isaiah is not the only one who states this glorious truth. See 1 Peter ii. 24 : "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body to the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes we are healed." None can tell the agonies He endured when the fearful weight of His people's transgressions lay heavily upon Him. The reprobate Cain declared that his punishment was greater than he could bear (Gen. iv. 13). The consequence of his sin was too heavy for him to endure, and if this be so in the case of reprobates, what must it be with vessels of mercy who are brought into spiritual oneness with a precious Christ? Those of you who, by the convincing power of God the Hcly Ghost, see sin as God sees it, know it as God knows it, and hate it as God hates it, have cried with the Psalmist, "There is no soundness in my flesh, because of Thine anger ; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psa. xxxviii. 3, 4). If the burden of sin is intolerable for a poor sinful wretch, what must it have been to a sinless Redeemer? You and I have

natures sinful and depraved. His nature was holy and undefiled. Our nature courts sin, hugs sin, delights in sin. His nature shrank from sin, hated the thought of contact with it, yet out of pure love to His Church He took the accumulated load of her sins and transgressions, and put them all away by the sacrifice of Himself. It is my mercy to know that He bore all the sins I have committed, all that I am committing, and all that I shall commit while I am in this body of corruption and death. And, mark you, not only mine, but all the sins of the whole elect of God were borne by Him from the moment the circumcising knife pierced His sacred and sensitive flesh, when He was made under the law for them, to that dread moment when He cried, to the consternation of all hell, and the delight of all heaven, "It is finished." He there endured all the punishment due to His people's sins, and bore in His sacred bosom the wrath, indignation, and fury of a sin-hating God. To Calvary He wended His weary way, bearing the curse and cross of the Church. Look at that terrible declaration in Deut. xxi. 23: "He that is hanged is *the curse of God*" (See margin). None but Christ ever knew the full meaning of this. Paul directs our minds to Him in Gal. iii. 13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Here we see Him bearing, and becoming "THE CURSE OF GOD," and descending to a hell of suffering so richly deserved by His people. Being Himself an eternal and infinite Being, He imparted eternal value and infinite efficacy to the sufferings He endured, so that amid the isolation, desertion, and desolation He experienced upon Calvary's cursed tree a rent was found in the dark cloud of judgment, His Father's complacent smile met His view, and as the Righteous Servant and successful Saviour, He breathed His spirit into the hands of His God.

"*His legs.*" High in the heights of glory the God-Man stands for sinners vile like you and me. There, sin can never touch Him, condemnation cannot reach Him, neither can the sneers or frowns of His enemies for one moment affect Him. He stands interested in all the concerns and cares of His people. In His sympathising heart He bears the griefs and carries the sorrows of His living members. As the great High Priest over the house of God, He bears the iniquities of the holy things of His redeemed worshippers. This is beautifully set forth in the case of Aaron in Exod. xxviii. 38: "And it" (HOLINESS TO THE LORD) "shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon His forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD." In the presence of the Father He stands upon the ground of His perfected redemption; in the prevalency of His intercession, He spreads His wounded hands, displays His once thorn-crowned

brow, and reveals His once pierced side for His people. He stands up to plead their cause and to defend them from those who would condemn their souls (Psa. lxi. 31).

“ In every pang that rends the heart,  
The ‘ Man of sorrows ’ bears a part ;  
He sympathises with our grief,  
And brings the suffering saint relief.”

It is no mean mercy to know He who was once the Man of sorrows upon earth is the Man of sympathy in heaven. Though enthroned in glory, He is concerned in all the cares and conflicts of tried and tempted ones here upon earth, and bears them all in the sympathies of His ever-loving heart. Look at this in the light of that precious new covenant command given in Psalm lv. 22 : “ Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Consider it also in the light of those sweet words of the apostle, “ Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you ” (1 Peter v. 7). As the great King-Priest, and the gracious sympathizing Saviour, He can with grace and power command His people to confide in Him. Yonder He stands in all the glories of His Godhead, and all the sympathies of His Manhood. Having met all the requirements of infinite justice, He now meets with His people in all their sorrows and necessities, bears with them in all their infirmities, counsels them in all their difficulties, comforts them in all their sorrows, defends them in all their dangers, and with the right hand of His righteousness upholds them in all their weaknesses, wants, and woes.

“ *His legs.*” O what glorious truths we find in these two precious words! Upon His faithfulness and firmness He stands and bears all the glory of His Father’s house. Poor human nature could not do this. But where His people fail, there He fully accomplishes. Turn with me to Zech. vi. 12, 13 : “ Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the Man whose name is the BRANCH: and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the LORD; even He shall build the temple of the LORD; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne: and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” The glory of JEHOVAH as revealed in His plan of grace is too much for finite creatures to bear alone. He is the Bearer of the glory of God’s covenant, God’s creation, and of God’s salvation. The glory of God’s communications is such that no created being could bear it without the sustaining power of His own right hand. But blessed with the experience of His love and power, they rejoice in the sweet assurance that He who bore their persons upon His breast in the covenant of grace from all eternity—He who bore their sins from Bethlehem’s manger to Calvary’s cross—He who bore the wrath of a sin-

hating God on their behalf—He who bears with their manners in the wilderness—He who bears with them in all their anxieties, perplexities, and cares, will bear them until the last sigh has escaped from their heaving bosoms, and their spirits stand in the presence of their God, glorious in His perfections, and arrayed in His beauty.

“He bears my fainting spirit up  
Through all the dreary paths I tread;  
And when I sip life's bitter cup,  
His left hand holds my drooping head.”

“*His legs.*” We are directed by these words to consider His ways. Here it is our blessed privilege to see Him in His goings forth in covenant. Our old friend Micah loved to speak of Him thus, “Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting. And He shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God: and they shall abide: for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth” (Micah v. 4). I love to see Him in His covenant paths going forth for the preservation, salvation, and glorification of an elect people in Himself. Blessed with the sight of this, and in the consciousness of my own weakness, I sometimes cry, “Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not” (Psalm xvii. 5); and as He graciously gives me to experience His sustaining goodness, my adoring spirit cries, “My foot standeth in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the LORD” (Psa. xxvi. 12). When I feel my feet to be slipping, I cry, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa. cxix. 117). It is then He comes and sweetly whispers, “I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble” (Prov. iv. 11, 12). Why have we this certainty? Because the ways of a precious Christ in covenant, and those He took here upon earth for His people, are straight for them to walk, or to be guided in. See how these ways are described in the written Word and opened up in the experience of the saints. Moses says in Deut. xxxii. 4, “All His ways are judgment.” David declares, “The LORD is righteous in all His ways” (Psa. cxlv. 17). Hosea affirms, “The ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein” (Hos. xiv. 9). In the ways of the Lord transgressors shall be trodden and bruised under the feet of the poor and the needy (Isa. xxvi. 6; Rom. xvi. 20). Look at that glorious testimony in Rev. xv. 3: “Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty.” Here we see His hands. “*Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.*” There we see His legs. It is our joy and rejoicing to know that the foot-prints which our blessed Lord left upon the sands of the desert are for His discerning followers to tread in. His ways are right, and none but righteous persons walk in them. When He was upon

earth, His Father saw His ways and was well pleased. His people saw them and were delighted, knowing that the righteousness thereof was theirs. Devils saw them and witnessed their overthrow. Enemies saw them and hated and reviled Him. Christ alone could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30).

"*His legs.*" These denote the ways of Christ for His people collectively, ministerially, and individually. You have noticed that precious testimony in Rev. ii. 1: "Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, *who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*" In the midst of His Church a precious Jesus walks attending to the varied wants and necessities of His members.

"He bears the names of all His saints  
Deep on His heart engrav'd;  
Attentive to the state and wants  
Of all His love has sav'd."

As in covenant, help was laid upon Him, the Mighty One (Psalm lxxxix. 19), so now, when in the manifestation of God's righteous judgments, the earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved, He says, "I bear up the pillars of it" (Psalm lxxv. 3). The elect are the pillars or preservers of the earth, and are held upon the legs of Christ. No weakness can be found in the legs of Christ. They are not like those of the lame, or a parable in the mouth of fools, unequal. Perfection, purity, and preciousness shine in the ways and works of Jesus. Yes, perfection is seen in the purposes of His heart, in the promises of His mouth, and in the performances of His hands. "*His legs are as pillars of marble.*" Pure, permanent, powerful, precious, and perfect. "*Set upon sockets of fine gold.*" The place of His feet is glorious indeed (Isaiah lx. 13). There, permanency is the lot of all those whom He brings into sweet association with Himself. It matters not what may be the earthly lot of those upheld by Him, pain or pleasure, poverty or riches, need or supply, sinful or saved, be He to them feelingly present or absent, all must and shall be well with them. His feet, like His head, are of fine gold. He is altogether precious. God and Man. One Christ.

"Salvation to God who sits on the throne!  
Let all cry aloud and honour the Son;  
So strong to deliver, so good to redeem  
The weakest believer that hangs upon Him."

May He add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S COUNTENANCE.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 14TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."—Song of Solomon  
v. 15.

TO meditate upon the beauties of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to talk of His preciousness and power, is the delight of all those who are blessed with an experimental acquaintance and spiritual oneness with Him. Whilst thus privileged, the mind of the Spirit-taught is free from the cares, anxieties, and perplexities which attend it during the greater part of the journey through this wilderness world to that rest which the weary pilgrim greatly desires, that home of bliss and blessedness for which he oftentimes sighs. "Christ is all" is the theme of every true believer's song. Christ everything and the sinner nothing at all is the confession of every sinner saved by rich and sovereign grace. Christ first, Christ last, and Christ All in all is the burden of every spiritual worshipper in Zion's temple. Christ in everything is the desire of the soul brought into the knowledge and apprehension of its everlasting and unchangeable oneness with a covenant God in His adorable person. Christ All and in all is the burden of the preaching in this place. He is here exalted above all blessing and praise, and preferred before all other persons. We look at the doctrines of the written Word, but we desire to know Him as our Doctor, or Teacher. Is practical godliness our theme? We love to behold it in the walk and conversation of the God-Man, the Father's Righteous Servant here upon earth for His own. It is no desire of my heart to waste your time in describing the experience of the Christian; but I do strive to set before you the experience of the Man of sorrows and those in union with Him, for there is much in what is called the experience of a Christian which has nothing to do with experimental oneness with Him. There is much which



we are apt to linger over, and hug to ourselves with tenacity, as evidences of our union to our Lord Jesus Christ, which, in themselves, are no evidences at all. And here I would say—not by way of railing, but as a word of caution and counsel to those of you who have been blessed with fellowship with Christ in His sufferings—that, much which is preached in reference to the spiritual exercises of God's children is not spiritual, but merely the narration of afflictions and trials common to mankind. I remember upon one occasion sitting for nearly an hour listening to remarks on this precious portion, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psa. xxxiv. 19). Fifty minutes were taken up with the afflictions, but I could not detect the afflictions of Christ, nor find any fellowship with my gracious Lord and Master in them. The afflictions described by the preacher were those which any reprobate may experience. As I look into God's blessed Word and read of the afflictions of the righteous, I long to know in deed and in truth that I am in possession of them. I desire to know their true nature and character, the source from whence they spring, and the Person by whom they are wrought in me. See! Loss of property, health, friends, or all combined form no real evidence of union to the Lord Jesus Christ. I have known many who have suffered all these but have given no evidence of the life of God within. What are the afflictions of the righteous? The application of God's righteous law revealing sin in its true character, the revelation of sin in the light of the Redeemer's perfections, to carry about with me a load of sin which my old nature hugs, but my new nature rejects; to be bowed down with a body of death and corruption which would drag me into sin and drown me in despair; to be troubled with an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God when I would be embraced in the arms of His everlasting love and mercy; to inhabit the parched places of the wilderness when I would be refreshed with the streams of grace in the sanctuary; to be barren when I would be fruitful in the ways of the Lord; to desire to sing His praises with a melting heart when I might as well try to create a world. These, I believe, are some of the afflictions of the righteous. To long for the joys of His presence and to bask in the sunshine of the favour of my God, while, all the while, I am left in darkness and desertion, is an affliction well known to the righteous. Read for yourselves 2 Cor. i. 5: "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." But what are the sufferings of Christ abounding in us? We, as the members of that body of which He is the Head, experience in measure the sufferings which He experienced in all their fulness while here upon earth. These sufferings are physical, mental, and spiritual; but in them the heart is exercised as to its acceptance with a covenant God in Christ. As these sufferings abound in us, so our consolation

will and must abound by Him. Now, it is our delight, however painful and perplexing the privilege may be, to be led into the spiritual understanding and apprehension of these spiritual mysteries, against which our carnal minds kick, rebel, and manifest their enmity. Our wretched flesh will start and shrink from spiritual suffering, while our redeemed spirits, in union with the Lord Jesus Christ, will pant after brighter and clearer revelations of His adorable person therein.

It has been our lot for some time past to contemplate the varied beauties of our adorable Head and Husband as revealed in the preceding part of this very precious portion of God's written Word. We have looked at the general view given of Him by the bride at the commencement of her heart-glowing description of the One Object of her love. "My Beloved is white and ruddy; the Chiefest among ten thousand." He is the only One in whose company she is truly at home, in peace, and sweet enjoyment. She particularises and rejoices to know that—

"*His head*" is her glory,  
 "*His locks*" are her delight,  
 "*His eyes*" are her guides,  
 "*His cheeks*" are her safety,  
 "*His lips*" are her comfort,  
 "*His hands*" are her security,  
 "*His heart*" is her joy,  
 "*His legs*" are her stability.

It is ours now to look at the precious metaphors in the text,—

"His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."

"*His countenance.*" The bride having surveyed with admiration the particular beauties and graces of her Beloved, now surveys with delight His general appearance, His graceful form, and commanding stature. That this is the meaning of the word "*countenance*," you will see by turning to 2 Sam. xxiii. 20, 21, where Benaiah is spoken of as, "a goodly man," or, as you read in the margin, "*a man of countenance or sight*:" called, "*a man of stature*" (1 Chron. xi. 23). Before we enter into an elucidation of the text we will notice a few Scriptures which describe the Lord Jesus Christ in what He is to His people under that expression, "*His countenance.*" Sometimes we hear the word "*countenance*" used to express help or encouragement. To give a person countenance is to inspire him with hope, or encourage him with assistance. All of this is blessedly experienced by those who are brought by the Holy Ghost into blessed and hallowed communion with the Head and Husband of His Church and people. When they approach Him as beggars and bankrupts, He encourages them with His promises, and enriches them with His perfections. He bestows upon them all the bounties, blessings, and benefits given into His hand by the Father for them, and which are theirs in virtue of their election

in Him, and their everlasting relationship to the Father. Turn with me to Psa. xlii., where David expresses his distress at the hiding of JEHOVAH'S countenance, and His desire for communion with Christ and His people in the sanctuary: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, yea, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" You see by this that the one delight and desire of David's heart was his God. As our souls are blessed with this privileged experience, we can sing with Dr. Watts,—

"To Thee we owe our wealth, and friends,  
And health and safe abode;  
Thanks to Thy name for meaner things,  
But they are not my God."

David's anxiety was not so much as to be found in the assemblies of God's saints; but the longings and cravings of his spiritual nature were for the person and presence of his adorable Lord. In ver. 5 he is represented as turning in upon himself and thus soliloquising, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" In the margin you will find a more expressive word for "*cast*," and reads thus, "Why art thou *bowed down*, O my soul?" Many of God's living children can answer in the language of Toplady:

"Encompass'd with clouds of distress,  
And tempted all hope to resign,  
I pant for the light of Thy face,  
That I in Thy beauty may shine.  
Dishearten'd with waiting so long,  
I sink at Thy feet with my load;  
All plaintive I pour out my song,  
And stretch forth my hands to my God."

I am at times bowed down with a sense of the sins I hate, with the absence of my God when I long for His presence, with Satan's temptations and assaults when I would be wholly free from all contact with him. David continues his soliloquy: "And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." Do notice the marginal rendering, "*His presence is salvation.*" There is a fund of meaning in this. Sometimes we see a person in a fix, struggling at the end of his resources, and the only hope he has is in obtaining the countenance, assistance, and encouragement of some substantial person, which he considers would be the making of him for life. We see this illustrated in the annals of warfare. Who of us as Englishmen can but think, with a little national pride, of the defence of Lucknow? When our besieged countrymen were longing for the appearance of Sir Colin Campbell and his valiant warriors, who were bringing relief and deliverance by the bravery of their hearts and the strength of their arms, the distant sounds of their musical instruments inspired the besieged with confidence. So it is with the living

children of God, in the midst of conflict they sigh for rest; at war with the world, the flesh, and the devil, they cry for peace; and as they wrestle, ay, agonize with the powers of darkness, they sometimes come to the conclusion that sin, death, and hell will gain the day. What constitutes salvation at such a crisis as this? The appearance of the Captain of our salvation. Let Him reveal Himself in any of His exceeding great and precious promises, let His glorious voice be heard calling across the hills of our doubts, fears, and infirmities, or over the mountains of our transgressions, sins, and iniquities, and our very hearts are cheered and encouraged to fresh conflicts with Satan, sin, and self who are ever seeking our overthrow. Blessed be God, "His presence is salvation."

"*His countenance.*" At the commencement of *Psa. xlv.* you read of the ancient Church. I use the words, *ancient church*, advisedly, because some would have us believe there was no Church before the day of Pentecost. But I love the plain declarations of God's written Word, and to leave carnal scribes to their own fleshly deductions. That there was an ancient Church we have the testimony of Stephen in *Acts vii. 38*: "This is he, that was in the Church in the wilderness, with the Angel which spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the holy oracles to give unto us." The presence, or countenance, of the covenant Angel was the preservation of the Church in the wilderness in the midst of all her temptations, trials, and tribulations. In recounting the mercies of her covenant God she said, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How Thou didst drive out the heathen with Thy hand, and plantedst them; how Thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them." It is because the Lord has shown favour after favour unto us by the light and protection of His countenance that we are found here this morning, listening to His great salvation as revealed in His own glorious Gospel. It was because He had a favour unto us in the covenant of old that He gave—I was about to say—our *worthless* persons, but this I deny. Sometimes we are betrayed into modes of expression which do not correctly express the mind and will of God concerning His own. As seen in the covenant, the elect of God are not worthless, they are His jewels, His special treasure, His inheritance. In the hand of our precious Redeemer the Church ever appears as a crown of glory and a royal diadem (*Isa. lxii. 3*). Therefore I will not say *worthless persons*; but our persons worthy in the worthiness of Christ, righteous in His righteousness, holy in His holiness, excellent in His excellency, perfect in His perfections, complete in Him.

When the Father gave us to Him, He had a favour unto us, the height and depth, the length and breadth of which He will reveal in His own time in those spots of sin, suffering, and sorrow wisely ordained by Him, and into which we are brought for the display of His magnanimous grace. In them He blesses us with pardon through precious blood, justification through spotless righteousness, acceptance in the person of our great and glorious Head, and a welcome to His loving heart because of what He sees and knows us to be in the person and perfections of the Son of His love. He had a favour unto us when He sent His Son into those spots of sin and sorrow which we now experience, those spots of condemnation where our souls have trembled with the fear of JEHOVAH'S anger, indignation, and fury, those spots of desertion and darkness where we have dreaded the darkness of eternal despair, where He learned how to truly sympathise with us in all tribulations that we endure for His sake.

*"His countenance."* What is the desire and delight of our hearts this morning? The light of His countenance which reveals the love of His heart. Turn over to Psalm lxxxix. 15: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Thy countenance." What is it that cheers your heart in the midst of all your sorrows? What is it that scatters all your doubting and unbelief, and brings you into the enjoyment of covenant blessings? It is the countenance of your great and adorable Lord. We see this in many portions of the New Testament Scriptures, especially after the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. When He had offered Himself a sacrifice for the sins of His people, and He was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, His poor disciples were filled with disappointment. They thought He was to restore the temporal kingdom of Israel to a state of greater grandeur and glory than aforetime. There are many like them now, who judge according to the flesh, forgetting those precious words:—

"My soul through many changes goes,  
His love no variation knows."

Almost as soon as the Lord Jesus was in the grave, Peter said, "I go a fishing." The disciples were one with him, and said, "We also go with thee." They went; they toiled all night, and caught nothing. In the morning Jesus stood on the shore. At His bidding a great multitude of fishes filled the net. John said to Peter, "It is the Lord." Peter, who at one time would walk on the water but began to sink, was now a good swimmer in the presence of his Master. In the light of His countenance sinking sinners can swim through seas of trouble, limping sinners can walk through rugged paths, weary sinners can run along tribulation's track, and burdened sinners can fly above all that would bow them down to earth. Turn with me

to Luke xxiv. Two of His disciples, wending their weary way to a village called Emmaus, talked together in sadness of the things that had happened. Jesus drew near and went with them, but their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. He said unto them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad?" From their troubled hearts and trembling lips He drew the acknowledgment of their ignorance and unbelief. "Then He said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Arriving at Emmaus, being constrained, He went in to tarry with them. He took bread, blessed it, brake it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, they knew Him, and He ceased to be seen of them. In a moment they were denied the help, light, and salvation of His countenance. Again He appeared to them at Jerusalem. "He showed them His hands and His feet." Luke tells us, "They believed not for joy." John says, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord" (John xx. 20). So it is now with the disciples on resurrection ground. Is He present? They are happy. Is He absent? They are miserable. Does He bless them with the light of His countenance? It is then they can rejoice before Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This is sweetly expressed in these lines by Kelly:—

"In Thy presence I am happy;  
 In Thy presence I'm secure;  
 In Thy presence all afflictions  
 I can easily endure;  
 In Thy presence I can conquer,  
 I can suffer, I can die;  
 Far from Thee I faint and languish,  
 Oh, my Saviour, keep me nigh!"

*"His countenance is as Lebanon."* His general appearance, stature, and presence is as Lebanon. Why? Because Lebanon is high, exalted, and lifted up by the Almighty Creator's hand above all its surroundings. So our most glorious Christ as the Head and Representative of grace is high, exalted, and lifted up by the same almighty hand above all created beings, and above all blessing and praise. We talk about our praising and adoring so great and glorious a Being, but we may well hide our heads for shame at the very thought of our poor praise of One so great, mighty, majestic, and glorious. He is high and lifted up above all His brethren and all the elect angels. So the apostle Paul describes Him throughout the whole of that blessed epistle to the Hebrews. Whatever is introduced to our notice must pass on one side at the appearance of Him who is the joy and rejoicing of His people's hearts. Angels pure and

spotless are seen as the messengers of mercy to God's elect ; but He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. We look at the ranks of God's redeemed, and see every one of them cast the crown of His giving at His sacred feet, acknowledging Him Lord of all. Blessed with the sight we gladly sing :—

“ The head that once was crowned with thorns  
Is crowned with glory now ;  
A royal diadem adorns  
The mighty Victor's brow.”

In whatever aspect we behold Him, He appears as Lebanon, the Chief, the Highest, the Head, the One who in all things has the pre-eminence. Do we look at the saints ? He is King of saints (Rev. xv. 3). Do we see a multitude of sinners redeemed by His most precious blood ? We see Him Chief among them. That title which Paul took to himself—“ Chief of Sinners ”—can only sit well upon Him who was so by imputation, but not by any act or omission of His own. Look at Him as we may, He ever appears in the perfection of His Being and works, as Lebanon, “ exalted as Head over all ” (1 Chron. xxix. 11). Trace His history from Bethlehem to Calvary, from the cradle to the cross, and you will see that which never appeared on this sin-cursed earth before—a real Man without sin, a tempted and tried Man, in whom Satan could find nothing to gain even a mean advantage. In His person and work we see Him inherently and incessantly righteous. Spotless obedience He rendered to His Father's law, and, blessed be God, that spotless obedience is everything to me.

“ *His countenance is as Lebanon.* ” Here we behold the majesty of Christ. He is not only a perfect Man high above all His fellows ; He “ is over all God blessed for ever ” (Rom. ix. 5). All things in heaven, in earth, and in deep places are at His behest. All states, circumstances, and influences occur at His bidding. Look at His majesty and dignity as described by Paul in Eph. i. 20—23. Speaking of the power of the Father, he says, “ Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come ; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” In the contemplation of greatness like this, the majesty and supremacy of our most glorious Christ, we delight to see that the devil has not all things his own way. We glory in Him who reigns, and “ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet ” (1 Cor. xv. 25). We know in the desires of our hearts after Him that He is bodily absent from us ; but we rejoice in the glorious fact that He is spiritually

present with us, managing our affairs, subduing our foes, and blessing us now and then with sweet revelations of Himself. Here I would have you notice a subject which has rested upon my mind for many a long day. Many of those portions in the New Testament which speak of the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the coming of Jesus Christ, have to do with present experience, and not with future glory. The living child of God loves present tense blessings, and in many of these portions I long for the coming of my Lord and Saviour with power and great glory to my heart. I wait for the revelation of God's Christ in me by the grace and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. I want the openings up of the beauties and excellencies of Jesus to my enlightened understanding. As I enjoy the fulfilment of these longings and desires in my heart's experience, I glory in the help of His countenance, the health of His countenance, and bask in the sunshine of His Father's presence and mine. As I am led to contemplate His coming, and His revelation in the light of His sovereignty and supremacy over all things, I see all enemies, obstacles, hindrances under His feet. The cross which I have attempted to evade, the sorrow I have tried to shun, and the losses, crosses, anxieties, and cares I have endeavoured to escape, are all under His feet. If I am occupied with the things under His feet, I am courting my own distresses, and lose sight of my only Deliverer from them. It is our mercy to know that He has all spiritual and covenant blessings in His hand to bestow upon His tried and tempted brethren, while He holds all that would hurt or destroy them under His feet. Yes, there He treads down every care and anxiety which worms its way through our distracted brain; every fierce temptation, vile insinuation, and accursed injection of the devil; every distressing circumstance and evil influence; every doubt and dread which we have experienced, and shall experience; every pang of sickening despair in which I have questioned the reality of the life, light, and love with which He has blessed me—all these are under His feet. Blessed with a good understanding in these things, I am

"Amazed to see myself so vile,  
And Jesus smiling all the while."

As I thus behold Him, His appearance is as Lebanon, high, lifted up, exalted, stately, and majestic. I see Him triumphing over all my foes and giving me the blessed assurance that I shall be more than conqueror through Himself who has loved me, and will love me to the end of all my sins, sufferings, and sorrows.

"His countenance is as Lebanon." Look at that glorious description given of Him in Phil. ii. 5, &c., "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a



servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man *He humbled Himself*." There is not a man in all God's creation can do that. We must be humbled. That is God's work. It is not because of wisdom, strength, striving, or struggling, but wholly because of the strength of His own right hand and His holy arm, the light of His countenance, and because He has a favour unto us that we are humbled in ourselves, and exalted in Christ. Look! "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here I would give you a hint. Death itself was not that bitter ingredient, in the cup which the Saviour took from His Father's hand, from which He shrank. Desertion, not death, was the dread of His sorrowing soul. He submitted to death willingly. He died voluntarily. He laid down His life. He yielded up the ghost. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven"—the glorified, redeemed, and elect angels there—"and things on earth"—the regenerate children of God—"and things under the earth"—devils and damned spirits! All creation must bow to the sceptre of King Emmanuel. "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The glorious harmonies of heaven, the feeble utterances of earth, and the discordant noise and din of hell's dark regions, all combine to show forth the sovereignty and supremacy, majesty and glory, of Zion's Well-Beloved. Inspired with a theme so grand and glorious, we may well sing in strains of spiritual adoration,—

"Keep silence, all created things,  
And wait your Maker's nod;  
My soul stands trembling while she sings  
The honours of her God.  
Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown  
Hang on His firm decree;  
He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave TO BE."

The general appearance of the lovely Bridegroom, our adorable Emmanuel, to His bride the Church is such as to inspire her with hope, cheer her with love, and encourage her with faith of His own giving and working.

"*Excellent as the cedars.*" The cedars were remarkable for the firmness, strength, durability, and beauty. Isaiah describes them as "tall" (2 Kings xix. 23). The Psalmist speaks of them as "goodly," or "*the cedars of God*" (margin, Psa. lxxx. 10). Jeremiah styles them as "choice" (Jer. xxii. 7). The wood, which is of a durable nature, was largely used in the erection of Solomon's temple, hence the temple is sometimes styled Lebanon (see Zech. xi. 1). The people of God are likened unto the stately cedar. "The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree:

he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (Psa. xcii. 12). In all these portions some rare quality or excellency of the great and glorious Head of the Church is revealed. The boughs and branches stretch out to a great distance, affording shelter and repose to the weary traveller. In this we see a striking metaphor of Christ in His covenant relationship to His people. Amid the ravages of sin, and the storms of fiery wrath and indignation, He is ever a shelter and rest to His own. Of Him we may ever sing,

"With joy lift up you heads,  
Ye highly-favoured few,  
When through the earth destruction spreads;  
For what shall injure you?

When storms or tempests rise,  
Or sins your peace assail,  
Your hope in Jesus never dies,  
'Tis cast within the veil.

Here let the weary rest,  
Who love the Saviour's name;  
Though with no sweet enjoyment blest,  
This cov'nant stands the same."

As the cedars spread forth their roots to a large extent, so a precious Christ roots and grounds Himself in the love and affection of His people, and, blessed be His holy name, He will make it true in their heart's experience that they are "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. iii. 17). The foliage of the cedar is ever green. In the person, love, grace and beauty of Jesus there is no change or decay. The tried and tempted members of Christ are painfully conscious of their changes, and confess them in the graphic language of the prophet: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; *and we all do fade as a leaf*: and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isa. lxiv. 6). But in our blessed Lord eternal youth and unfading beauty are found. His righteousness is ever glorious. His intercession ever ascends. His love is ever the same.

"His love no end or measure knows,  
No change can turn its course;  
Eternally the same it flows  
From one immortal source."

The wood of the cedar of Lebanon was fragrant and durable. Wherever the Heavenly Bridegroom reveals Himself to His bride, there is sure to be the fragrance of covenant blessing. "His name is as ointment poured forth" (Song i. 3). The saints are counselled to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved *them*, and hath given Himself for *them* an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Eph. v. 2). His fragrance and durability is sweetly set forth in Psa. xlv. 6—8: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and

hatest iniquity : therefore God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad." He covers His whole Church with His sweet perfume. Wherever the great King-Priest is known in the sanctuary as the Conductor of the liturgies of His people, and the Leader of their praises, there

" His name, as precious ointment shed,  
Delights the Church around ;  
Sweetly the sacred odours spread  
Thro' all Emmanuel's ground."

All His blessings are durable as Himself. In covenant relationship with His people He says, " Durable riches and righteousness are with Me " (Prov. viii. 18). With the knowledge and enjoyment of their oneness with Him, they can sing,

" In union with the Lamb,  
From condemnation free,  
The saints from everlasting were,  
And shall for ever be."

Contemplate Him as we may, He is excellent as the cedars. Seen as the Head of the new creation, He is greeted thus by His regenerate people: " O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth ! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens " (Psa. viii. 1). Known as the Refuge of His eternally loved ones, they cry out, " How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God ! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings " (Psa. xxxvi. 7). Blessed with a knowledge so precious, we cannot restrain our feelings, but sing with the ancient Church, " Sing unto the LORD ; for He hath done excellent things : this is known in all the earth " (Isa. xii. 5).

Blessed with the favour of our covenant God before all worlds, redeemed by the precious blood of our adorable Redeemer, and brought by the anointings of the ever-blessed Spirit to enjoy His company, we shall delight to sit at His feet, look into His face, admire every part of His sacred person, and rejoice in the sweet hope that by-and-bye, when sin is sunk in eternal oblivion, when sorrow has for ever ceased, and when suffering shall no more trouble us, in the land of eternal bliss and blessedness,

" There we shall see His face,  
And never, never sin ;  
There, from the rivers of His grace,  
Drink endless pleasures in."

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S MOUTH.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"His mouth is most sweet."—Song of Solomon v. 16.

IN God's good providence we are gathered together again to meditate upon the personal beauties of our Lord Jesus Christ. As He is revealed to the heart by the grace and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the adoring saint, the admiring bride cries out in tones of joy and gladness: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psalm lxxiii. 25). In the exercise of His own indisputable sovereignty, He is pleased sometimes to hide Himself, from the gaze of those who are near and dear unto Him, behind the strange visitations of His providence. He thus brings them to experience spiritual desires and longings after Him, as expressed in those words at the commencement of this precious Song: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." The bride mentions no name, but says, "*Let Him,*" as though all the persons to whom she speaks must of necessity know the person of whom she is speaking, and possess the same regard for Him with herself. She does not say, Let Jesus, Christ, my Husband, or my Saviour, but "*Let HIM kiss me.*" In the expression of this desire there is evidently a felt distance from Him whom her soul truly loves. Yet, in a moment there is a transition from His absence to His presence, as denoted in the last clause of the verse: "Thy love is better than wine." From a seeming distance she is brought into His sacred company. From desires for His communications she is brought to the delights of His embrace, or, which is still better, He comes with all His love and grace to the very place of her weakness, ignorance, and necessity, and graciously reveals Himself to her. Blessed with sweet draughts of the wine of His love, and favoured with

communion with Him, she says, "Thy love is better than wine." You will find this to be the experience of all God's children whose spiritual histories are recorded in this blessed Book. They were not always indulged to sit at the feet of Jesus, neither were they favoured with uninterrupted revelations of His person, offices, and work to their heart; they were not privileged to sit continually at the King's table, hearing Him say, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;" they were not always dandled upon the knees of eternal affection, nor unceasingly reposing upon the bosom of everlasting love. The mere professor knows nothing of those experiences recorded in God's written Word. Abraham went through a horror of great darkness (Gen. xv. 12) as well as rejoiced in His light whose day he saw and was glad (John viii. 56); Jacob, who was blessed with many manifestations of JEHOVAH-JESUS' love, and with the wrestling, support, and strength of the covenant Angel, when left to himself, and to his own gloomy surmisings, exclaimed, "All these things are against me" (Gen. xlii. 36); David, who was oftentimes blessed with access and introduction into the presence of his God, frequently mourned His absence, and with longings known only to those who are experimentally one with Him, could thus express himself: "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary" (Psalm lxxiii. 1, 2). Notice the true nature of this experience: "My God, early will I seek." What would he seek? Simply a manifestation or evidence of an interest in covenant verities? No. Simply for a token for good? No; but "I will seek Thee." A living person alone can satisfy a loving heart. Search through the New Testament, and you will find the same experience recorded there. The whole of the epistles by Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude were written for those who know that in themselves they are but vile and base, and are brought into a true understanding of that experience recorded by Paul in Rom. vii. The first part of this chapter describes a convinced sinner bowed down under the galling yoke of the law, and the weight of sin discovered by the convincing power of the Holy Ghost. The law demands a perfect obedience, reveals the inability of the creature to give it, and imparts no strength to comply with its demands. The second part of the chapter portrays the state of a child of God delivered from the curse of the law, but distressed with the discovery of a law of sin in his members bringing him into captivity thereto. All such are taught that there can be no true deliverance from the body of death, until it pleases God in the riches of His grace to divest the spirit of the burden of the flesh, and land it safe in everlasting joy and felicity up yonder.

It is our privilege this morning to look at the precious description given of her Husband by the bride, and, in humble dependence upon the leadings of God the ever-blessed Spirit, endeavour to find out the spiritual meaning of the words for our comfort and edification.

“His mouth is most sweet.”

This is a very blessed and precious declaration to those who have been brought into personal contact and communion with the great and glorious Head of the Church. The bride passes from admiring the commanding appearance of her loving Bridegroom, which we have considered in connection with the latter part of the previous verse. We now find her particularising that part of the face which God has ordained to be the means of communicating the mind, desire, love, and affection of one person to another, especially where true love and affection dwell. Some of you may be ready to say, We have had all this before from the words, “His lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh.” Ah! my dear friends, you may rest assured of this, that the two portions are not given to express exactly the same truth. There is something different and distinct in each to open up some precious treasure of Divine life and love. When the words—“*His mouth*”—flow from the lips of the loving bride, or from the exercised heart of a sinner saved by sovereign grace, a deeper depth of spiritual meaning, and a greater fulness of Divine truth than we have hitherto found, will most assuredly be revealed by the blessed Spirit's grace for our spiritual instruction and edification.

“*His mouth.*” In considering that precious metaphor—“*His lips*”—we found they referred to the words of grace, life, and power which flowed from the lips of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—words of rest, refreshment, and consolation to those for whom they were spoken. They expressed personal communication with Him. They are not communications from a distance, conveyed in a book or letter, but words spoken directly home, begetting personal intercourse and communion. All this is conveyed in the words of JEHOVAH by the prophet: “So shall My word be *that goeth forth out of My mouth*” (Isaiah lv. 11). Do notice that. It is not the word going forth out of the mouth of Isaiah, Peter, Paul, or any of His own sent servants, for oftentimes we find that the words of God's gracious servants are not conveyed by the power of the Holy Spirit to our hearts; but the words which go forth from the mouth of our great and gracious Saviour are carried by His almighty power to the hearts of those for whom they were designed, who shall be abundantly profited and refreshed thereby. This reminds me of those precious words of Hart's:—

“Though God's election is a truth,  
Small comfort there I see,  
Till I am told by God's own mouth  
That He has chosen me.”

A redeemed sinner who can sing that with the spirit and with the understanding, will never contend for the bare, abstract theory of election, but for the living, spiritual reality wrought in his heart's experience by the grace and indwelling of God the Holy Ghost. In meditating upon the words of our text, we will endeavour to notice,—

I.—HIS COMMANDS.

II.—HIS COMMUNICATIONS.

III.—HIS COMFORTS.

I.—HIS COMMANDS. We rejoice in the declaration of the apostle, "His commandments are not grievous" (1 John v. 3). The commandments of a covenant God in Christ are not grievous. But mark! When God's commands sounded forth from Sinai and came home with convincing power to our hearts, destitute of the knowledge of our grace-union to the Lord Jesus Christ, we considered them to be grievous indeed. They demanded full, perfect, unsinning obedience to every jot and tittle of the Divine law, and revealed to us our utter weakness and inability to fulfil it. The denunciation went forth, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10); and we discovered the painful fact that we had not continued in one thing written therein. But this was not all, we found our carnal minds to be enmity against God, and that if we had the power to obey Him, such is the perverseness of our will, we would not. Yes, such is the depravity, enmity, and incorrigibility of the natural mind of man, that if it has not a way made ready to hand of sinning against God, it will invent one. This is truth, not only written in this Book, but also in the experience of every living child of God. But we are privileged to know and contemplate the blessed fact that the commandments of a covenant God and Father in Christ are not grievous. What are His commandments? Where do they appear in this Book? When are they spoken home to the heart by the power, grace, and operation of God the ever-blessed Spirit? They are spoken home, and are exceeding precious at such times as those I have been describing to you. In times of want, weakness, weariness, and woe, His commandments are not grievous. He gives His people to experience the truthfulness of those words spoken by Him as recorded in John xiv. 21: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." With so glorious a declaration as this sounding in his ears, Judas, not Iscariot, might well ask, "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man will love Me, *he will keep My words*: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto Him, and make our abode with him." See! "*He will keep My words. He hath My command-*

*ments and keepeth them.*" These are words of grace and power spoken home to the heart of elect, redeemed, and regenerate sinners—words sweetly whispered in the ear and communicated by the grace and indwelling of Christ's own Spirit. Can he keep them? I ask you, Are you able to keep them? You answer me at once, No, I am not. Neither am I. Yet I do keep them; but it is by His grace and power working in me. It is not because He has simply put me in trust with them, but because He has been pleased to burn them into me as so many gracious brands which declare whose I am and whom I serve, and show forth in the face of all my enmity, rebelliousness, and base declensions, that I am a sinner saved by sovereign grace.

"I claim no merit of my own,  
But self condemned before Thy throne,  
My hopes on Jesus place;  
In heart, in lip, in life depraved.  
My theme shall be a sinner saved,  
And praise redeeming grace."

Precious and blessed are Christ's commandments to those who are brought into spots of spiritual necessity known only to the living in Jerusalem. As sin is revealed in its true nature to my awakened soul, as I see it in God's light and according to God's estimate, "exceeding sinful," I am convinced that my old nature is nothing else but sin, my actions are all sin, and in everything that springs from my vile nature nothing but sin is seen. Now, I sing not as once I did,

"Sin is mix'd with all I do,"

for all that I do is sin, and the spiritual knowledge of this brings me as a poor, weary, labouring, and heavy-laden sinner to seek for that deliverance and rest which comes alone from a covenant God in Christ. What commandment will suit me in such a plight as this? One that bids me behave myself? One that insists upon my circumspection and obedience? No! Such commandments would surely drive me mad. I speak honestly in the presence of His sacred Majesty. But this precious new covenant commandment will do for me, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). Some are pleased to style this an invitation of the Gospel, but mere invitations will never do for incorrigibles, nor for those who know their own vileness, the enmity of their carnal minds, and, like Daniel, whose comeliness is turned into corruption. Know ye anything of such an experience as this? Even now my heart melts within me as I remember the heart-felt confession of one who said, "I have taken a little comfort to myself as I have heard you quote those words,—

" 'Tis a point I long to know  
(Oft it causes anxious thought),  
Do I love the Lord, or no?  
Am I His, or am I not? "



But the devil has set upon me, and I am forced to the conclusion that I have been gratifying my own fleshly feelings while I have no part or lot in the matter of His grace." My dear friends, those who are brought into such spots of spiritual desolation, and have come to the end of the appointed time of their spiritual captivity, will gladly welcome this covenant command when spoken home from the mouth of a precious Christ, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." What rest is this? It is rest from all legal endeavours, typified in the rest the children of Israel enjoyed from the brick-kilns, the furnace, and the task-masters of Egypt. But the trials and temptations of the wilderness must be encountered and endured; hence the Lord Jesus, in His loving omniscience, continues His commanding, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; *and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*" Notice the two rests, "*I will give you rest,*" and "*ye shall find rest.*" "I will give you rest" from all labouring on legal ground, from all distress through the law's demands. But as you experience rest from the law's exactions and execrations, you shall experience restlessness from your restless flesh and from the seemingly untoward circumstances surrounding you. Yet here, again and again, "you shall find rest unto your souls." This rest lies in the glorious fact that a precious Christ has not only performed all legal things for me on the ground of law, but that He performs all spiritual things in me on the ground of grace. All that I have to take into the presence of my God for my acceptance with Him, is not of my own fleshly production, but wholly in Christ, and that revealed to my heart by the grace, indwelling, and power of God the ever-blessed Spirit. For this I bless, praise, and adore Him, and glory in the fact that "His commandments are not grievous." On new covenant ground they are exceeding precious and comforting to my soul. Ofttimes the children of God are cast down because of the repeated discovery of guilt, corruption, and depravity in their daily walk through the wilderness. Their pilgrim feet are oftentimes soiled with the mud and mire of this world, yet the glorious truth holds good, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). Mark you! it does not say *hath cleansed* us from all sin. That is a glorious truth. We are cleansed and shall never appear in the presence of an all-holy God anything else but pure, white, and clean in the person of Jesus, but day by day we realise the painful fact that in our journeyings our feet are soiled and our garments are filthy, which cause our joys to decline and our comforts to fade away. Instead of the righteousness of Jesus, the unrighteousness of self is presented to our view; instead of the enjoyment of His love, our own enmity is experienced; instead of His consolations, our own misery is felt. We write

bitter things against ourselves, and almost cut ourselves off from all hope when the covenant command comes forth from the mouth of our adorable Lord, "Come, now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah i. 18). The sense and realisation of what we are in ourselves is frequently a terrible burden to us; but even here He comes with His gracious command, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee" (Psalm lv. 22). Why, say some of you, I believe I have been enabled to cast my burden upon Him again and again, but it seems to return as weighty and heavy as ever. I appear not to get rid of it at all. Neither will you while you are in the flesh. This *casting* will continue all your journey through. If your burden is cast upon your gracious LORD, who has lovingly commanded you to do so, you cannot be in a spot of His creation, but there you will know that He is one with you and you are one with Him. If He is in you and you are in Him, you can never be rid of that which you roll upon Him while here below. It is like Simon of Cyrene bearing the cross of Jesus. Did Simon bear the cross alone? He did not. Spiritual fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings must be experienced by all the regenerate children of God, who shall, and must, be taught the preciousness of that wonderful declaration in 1 Cor. x. 13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." That is a strange escaping, unknown to all out of Christ. Escaping temptations, yet bearing them all the time. Again, the tried and tempted pilgrim is often hungering and thirsting, not after mere services, institutions, ordinances, tokens, or evidences, which are all very well in their place; professors, hypocrites, and make-believes seek after these with avidity; but the living child of God seeks for something more, even God Himself. This you will see in the experience of David, as recorded in Psalm xlii. 1, 2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" To all such, gracious covenant commands shall never be wanting. Where are they? Look at that blessed one in Isaiah lv. 1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, huy wine and milk without money and without price." But, say you, according to the preface to the chapter, these words form an exhortation of the prophet's. To this, I answer, A true prophet of the Lord sounds forth that which the Lord communicates. If this is not sufficient, turn to John vii. 37, where you read: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any

man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This is a covenant command from the mouth of a precious Christ, in which both grace and power combine to draw forth willing obedience from the hearts of His thirsting disciples. In these commands we have some opening up of that sweet metaphor—"His mouth."

II.—HIS COMMUNICATIONS. His words and commands, however sweet and pleasant they may be, do not fully meet the deep and inexpressible cravings of the Divine nature in the living children of God. Tell me, will words, though they be expressions of love and affection, satisfy the heart of a fond and faithful wife? You know very well they will not. What more is needed? Loving communications. You have these sweetly expressed in chap. i. 2: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." Here we see the mouth of the heavenly Bridegroom engaged in communicating His everlasting love, His untold and unutterable affection to His Church and people. Mark! Affection unutterable! Love untold! Yet both graciously communicated by unmistakable signs. The kiss of the mouth in Scripture is a token of

1. *Affection.*
2. *Reconciliation.*
3. *Acceptance.*
4. *Approbation.*

1. *Affection.* In turning to a few portions of God's Word we shall see what a kiss really and truly denotes. Turn with me to Gen. xxix. 9—11: "And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. *And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.*" What was all that kissing and crying about? Something which words could never express, which mere articulations could not convey. I do not think Rachel ever forgot that kiss as long as she lived, and you may rest assured that in it the affection of Jacob's whole soul went forth to the one object of his love. But where is the spiritual truth? It is in the revelation of a precious Christ to our hearts by the Holy Ghost, giving us to know the glorious fact, that He has loved us with an everlasting love. Look at that precious communication made to the weeping prophet in Jer. xxxi. 3: "The LORD hath appeared of old," or, *from afar*, "unto me." The prophet did not realise a present God: but He revealed Himself to him in a moment. The word "*saying*" ought not to be there. It is an interpolation. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Or, "*have I extended lovingkindness unto thee.*" How does He extend lovingkindness

unto His bride, the Church? By the sweet kisses of His mouth, which are the exceeding great and precious promises of a covenant God in Himself conveyed and applied to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost.

2. *Reconciliation.* If you will turn to Gen. xxxiii. 1—4, you will find Jacob full of trouble and anxiety for the safety of his wives and little ones. Esau, whom he expects to meet full of rage and fury with him, to take vengeance upon him for taking away his blessing and birthright, is drawing nigh. Jacob fears that all things are against him, and, with his usual tact, divides his family into companies. He puts the handmaidens and their children first, then Leah and her children, "and Rachel and Joseph hindermost." In this we see his youthful love cropping up. "And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother. *And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they wept.*" Here we see the kiss to be a token of reconciliation. And is it not a marvellous fact, only apprehended by the gracious teaching of the Holy Ghost, that, "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son," and, "much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life?" (Rom. v. 10.) In every portion of the New Testament Scriptures where the words *reconciliation*, *reconciling*, or *reconciled* occur, the reconciliation is always on the part of the creature, for God in His nature and attributes knows nothing of mutation or change. He is a God of everlasting love. In the pangs of the new birth, the poor sinner with his God is like Jacob with Esau, he expects to meet a God all frowns, but he sees a God all smiles. He beholds a God full of compassion. He enjoys the companionship of a God full of love. God's love in Christ Jesus is ever overflowing, but inexpressible, unspeakable, unutterable. It is sweetly described by Paul in Eph. iii. 17—19: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

3. *Acceptance.* Now turn to that precious portion in Luke xv. 11—32. The young prodigal in a far country comes to himself, thinks of his father's house and of his father's love. He says, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, *his father saw him.*" You may depend upon it, when we were a great way off in our unregeneracy, and now oftentimes when we are a great way off in our experience, feelings, and judgment, He sees us and knows all about us. "And had compassion, and ran, and fell on his

neck, and kissed him." As the valiant but now glorified William Parks once said, "The father stopped his legal and blubbering mouth with his own sweet kiss of acceptance." The son could say nothing concerning service while the father hung upon his neck. He could not say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." What is there so precious, so blessed, so sweet as the communications of covenant love from the lips of our gracious Husband and Head?

4. *Appreciation and approbation.* These we shall see revealed in this precious metaphor. Turn to Prov. xxiv. 26: "Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer." Look at this according to the margin, "Every man shall kiss his lips *that answereth right words.*" Who giveth a right answer? Who answereth right words? None but the Lord Jesus Christ, and every man loved with an everlasting love, elect of God, redeemed by His most precious blood, and regenerated by the grace and indwelling of God the Holy Ghost, shall kiss His lips. But look at it in this light. Lips that give a right answer shall be kissed. The sinner who has been brought and taught by the Holy Ghost to know and confess himself a sinner vile and base, and who makes a clean breast of all that he is and all that he has in the sight of infinite excellency, shall be kissed by the lips of a precious Christ, by which he shall know, that in the face of all his sin, enmity, and incorrigibility, he is a loved one in the house of the Father, approved in Christ, and appreciated for His sake by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Before dismissing this part of the subject let me ask you to notice that sweet incident in the life of Joseph, recorded in Gen. xlv. 14. His brethren hesitated to come near to him, until he made himself known to them. Then "he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him." Know ye aught of the spiritual truth couched beneath this precious portion of God's most Holy Word? Have you been favoured with the kisses of His mouth? In them are expressed the Father's unchanging affection to His children, their reconciliation to Him, their acceptance before Him, and His approbation and appreciation of them in all their failings. Have you experienced aught of this? Then you may rest assured that that last clause will be true in your experience, "*After that his brethren talked with him.*" You will never be satisfied with anything short of a little bit of talk with Jesus, that you may communicate to Him in your confessions, desires, and longings, your helplessness, that He may impart unto you His strength. You love to make known to Him your necessity, that He may open up to you that all-fulness which the Father has treasured up in Himself. You acknowledge to Him your foolishness, while He reveals Himself to you as your Wisdom. You seek occasions to breathe to Him the tale of

your sins and iniquities, while He sweetly whispers to your anxious soul, "*I am thy salvation.*"

### III.—HIS COMFORTS.

"*His mouth.*" Consult the margin of your Bible, and you will find these words rendered, "*His palate.*" This is that part of the mouth which tastes, tests, and proves the purity and sweetness of Zion's provisions. We have a glorious truth in this. Here it is. All that we spiritually receive and retain, and which we shall carry home to glory with us, comes directly from the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ. All spiritual blessings communicated to Him before the worlds were framed, every word of comfort, life, light, and liberty, every design of covenant mercy, must be spoken home to the heart from the mouth of the infallible Taster and Tester. He will not allow us to taste and try for ourselves before He has graciously gone before us. We are composite creatures—nature and grace—flesh and spirit—and it is marvellous how the flesh oftentimes seems to prevail over the spirit. We come to fleshly conclusions in reference to spiritual things, but the glorious fact holds good that in the Lord Jesus Christ purity and perfection reign. He could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30). Everything communicated by Him to His people is pure, holy, just, and good. Everything that He Himself tasted in the school of human suffering, as the Surety of the covenant, the Father's righteous Servant, and the elder Brother of His people to be bestowed upon them, He graciously communicates to them, and gives the blessed assurance that they shall stand the test of the world's conflagration, when He shall say to all hypocrites and fleshly professors, "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 21—23).

"*His mouth.*" This may mean His breath, His Spirit. You know the plaintive cry of Job in His affliction: "My breath is strange to my wife" (Job xix. 17). Was there ever a time when the Lord could say the same concerning those in covenant relationship with Him? I answer, Yes. You will find proof of this in Neh. ix.; Psalm lxxviii., cvi.; Isaiah lix.; Jer. iii., and the whole of the prophecy of Hosea. In each of these portions you will see the bride, the Church, God's Ephraim, God's Israel, wandering after other lovers. The blessings of His providing become nauseous to her. The communications of His mouth contain no sweetness for her. Yet for all this,

"His is love that never falters,  
Always to its object true."

The breath of His mouth in Scripture means His Spirit. "By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the Breath of His mouth" (Psalm xxxiii. 6). In creation, and in the new creation, all things are produced and

preserved by the Spirit of Christ. Elihu said, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the Breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job xxxiii. 4). This is precious indeed. The communications of God the Holy Ghost are the life and preservation of our spirits (Job x. 12). See how the Lord Jesus Christ states this in His last address to His disciples before His death: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him: for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 16, 17). Again, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (ver. 26). However forgetful we may be, one with Christ and blessed with the teaching of His Spirit, we can never perish for lack of knowledge. Look at chap. xv. 26: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." Where? In our heart's experience, when sin seems to deluge every spiritual faculty of the soul, and corruptions seethe and surge within us. He then graciously directs our minds from self to Christ, from sin to salvation, and from our miseries to His covenant mercies. Look also at chap. xvi. 13: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." His breath is most sweet. His Spirit's communications are most precious.

"*His mouth.*" His intercession. Blessings on His name, "He ever lives to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25). "And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi. 41, 42). He opens His mouth for His poor dumb people. He pleads the cause of the afflicted. He maintains the right of the poor. His intercession consists not in pleas and desires, but in demands and commands. See John xvii. 24: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. Look at this in the light of the preceding verse: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." Here we may well exclaim, "*His mouth is most sweet.*" Every command, communication, or comfort flowing from His mouth to His people, when enjoyed by them, is inexpressibly and inconceivably sweet. If this is true in time, what will it be in eternity?

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S LOVELINESS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
OCTOBER 5TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"Yea, He is altogether lovely."—Song of Solomon v. 15.

IN the description which the bride and each individual child of the living God gives to the question asked: "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?" she says not one word derogatory to the office, work, or words of her adorable Head and Husband. Such are the revelations He has given of Himself to her and in her, that she cannot do anything else but speak His praises and sound forth His glories and excellencies. She speaks of His general appearance: He is white, pure in His person and in His works. He is ruddy: there we behold the glorious perfection of His sufferings on the behalf of His bride. She goes on to describe what He is from the head to the feet. "He is the chiefest among ten thousand." Do men speak to her of kings? He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. Are saints brought before her view? He is the King of saints. Are sinners presented? The glorious doctrine of suretyship and substitution presents Him before her gaze, even as the chiefest among sinners—the chiefest of all those whose sins He took to Himself and whose sufferings and sorrows He bore in His own adorable person. Are angels presented? He is the covenant Angel, and the Head of all principality and power. Whatever name greets her ears, however excellent it may be, she knows that He has a name which is above every name, at which every knee in heaven, on earth, and in hell must and shall bow. It matters not whether persons or things are spoken of, Christ Himself has the pre-eminence in her estimation, knowledge, and experience. "*His head*" displays to her His glorious sovereignty, and with the revelation of this precious fact, mark you, any other Christ



which may be presented to the gaze of the true-born child of God is but an imaginary being. Without the sovereignty of God's Christ, there is no Christ for me. Without the manifestation of His majesty and His kingly character, what would be all His attempts to save, and with all He did and accomplished here on earth, what would He be? Only the make-sport of hell, and Satan himself would be able to twit Him with the fact that he had thwarted Him in the accomplishment of the Father's purpose. But it is our mercy to know that the Christ of God whom we adore, and who has blessedly been revealed to our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost, is that One who now sits on the throne of the Father, reigning and ruling over all things for His Father's glory, the honour of the Spirit, and the eternal preservation and glorification of all those given into His sacred hands.

"*His locks*, bushy and black as a raven." Here we find His determinations, decrees, purposes, and promises, all stable, firm, and substantial.

"*His eyes*," manifesting His omniscience, which has ever to do with every state, want, and necessity experienced by His pilgrim people here below.

"*His cheeks*." The revelation of JEHOVAH'S mind and will in His gracious face, according to the apostle's statement in 2 Cor. iv.: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the *face* of Jesus Christ." Only in the face of Jesus Christ can salvation, security, and sympathy be experienced.

"*His lips* dropping sweet smelling myrrh." His words of grace blessedly spoken home by the power of the Holy Ghost, communicating life, love, light, and liberty.

"*His hands*, gold rings set with beryls." These speak of His work, His performances and achievements for His people, by which the whole election of grace are perfectly secured and eternally saved.

"*His belly*," or His heart, "bright ivory overlaid with sapphires." There we see the purity of the affection which ever flows forth from Him to those who are the objects of the Father's choice, of His own redeeming grace, and the fruit of the travail of His soul.

"*His legs*, as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold." The Lord Jesus Christ the Bearer of all things for His children. All things, creation itself, existing for the Church's sake. The stability of Christ was such as caused Him to bear, without failure, fault, or flaw, all the accumulated sin, iniquity, and transgression of His people. He bore them all in gloomy, dark Gethsemane and on cursed Calvary. He bears the whole election of grace, and holds them securely in His adorable person in the face of all the blasts from hell and the withering influences with which

they may be surrounded, the sins which may distress them, and the corruptions which may seethe and surge within them.

"*His countenance* as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." The general appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ is excellent, glorious, and comely as Lebanon and its cedars. He is high, lifted up, and exalted above all praise and blessing in the estimation of His people.

"*His mouth* is most sweet." Not simply the words which flow from His mouth, but the communications of His lips, as set before us in chap. i. 2: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: Thy love is better than wine." Let Him communicate to me the blessings which the Father has given to Him for me. Let me have the blessed realisation of His *affection*, as Jacob kissed Rachel and "lifted up his voice and wept." Let me have the blessed consciousness of my *reconciliation* to Him, as the kiss of Esau assured poor trembling Jacob of reconciliation (Gen. xxxi.). Let Him bless me with the sweet consciousness of my *acceptance*, as the father gave to the prodigal son in the sweet kiss of acceptance and love. Let Him give to me the blessed realisation of His *approbation* of me. Let Him kiss me, let His mouth communicate to me the mind of His Father and mine (Prov. xxiv. 26). Let me have personal intercourse and communion with Him, and may I be locked in His loving embrace.

Now we are come to the precious declaration of the text. As the bride surveys Him in all these loving and lovable features, she says,

"Yea, He is altogether lovely."

We will look at the portion in the order in which it is given by the Holy Ghost:

I.—"YEA." There is certainty.

II.—"HE." His glorious person: Contemplate Him in His person, His office, and His relation.

III.—"ALTOGETHER." Nothing wanting, *altogether*, as much as to say all the excellencies of creation, all the excellencies, the perfections, and beauties which can flow from JEHOVAH'S hand, concentrate in the person of my Lover and my Husband.

IV.—"LOVELY."

I.—"YEA." You know it is our lot within these walls to love and to enjoy a Gospel which is all Yea in Christ Jesus. God's Yea stands in perpetual opposition to all Satan's nays. We may rest assured of this, according to the statement of God's most Holy Word, whatever God reveals to His people in Christ Jesus through the instrumentality of His Gospel, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, Satan is sure to set up a counterfeit. If there is the covenant of free, uninfluenced, and invincible grace revealed in God's blessed Word, you know full well that in ninety-nine out of every hundred places of worship, Satan is sure to have a covenant spoken of which is marred and soiled

by conditions, requirements, and exactions. Is God's Christ revealed in this blessed Word? The Saviour Himself tells us that some shall say, "Lo, here is Christ, and Lo, there is Christ;" but He says, "Believe them not." It is not Christ in this place, or Christ in that place, that will satisfy the longings and cravings of the true-born child of God; it must "be Christ in you, the hope of glory." Is Jesus revealed? I speak it with reverence, the name of Jesus is as common as ditch-water in these days. I say the name of Jesus in a multiplicity of cases is hated and abhorred of all faithful and honest men who are made so by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not the Jesus whom we love, and whom the Spirit is pleased to reveal by His gracious power and indwelling. The fashionable Jesus of the present day is that spoken of by the apostle in 2 Cor. xi. 4. It is not the Jesus who can save out and out; save from first to last, and who can save to the end. Of what? To the end of all my sins, my infirmities, my weaknesses, my corruptions, my doubts, my fears, my wretched unbelief, and to the end of all my cursed indifference. Some of you may say, you are treading on dangerous ground. It may be to you, it is not to me: it matters not how much a child of God may fall, or how often a child of God may sin, Jesus will save him to the uttermost of all his fallings and of all his sins. Is there a Gospel of free, sovereign, unmerited, and uninfluenced grace? You may depend upon it, another gospel is sure to be palmed off. Is there power declared in God's most Holy Word—power experienced in the heart of the child of God? There is sure to be a counterfeit dealt out by Satan, even fleshly free-will power which, in the matter of salvation, is weakness itself.

"Yea." Come to 2 Cor. i. 17. The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian Christians, says, "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? But as God is true, our word"—or our preaching—"toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." That is, by the ministers of His own appointing. No yea and nay gospel will do to meet the wants and necessities of His poor children. No linsey-woolsey garments to clothe the elect of God. No free and sovereign grace mingled with fleshly free-will. No performance and achievement of Jesus accompanied by the efforts, works, strugglings or strivings of the creature. No operation of God the Holy Ghost within, in the communication of the blessings of the covenant, marred and soiled by any fleshly, corrupt, and carnal experience produced by creature efforts. Mark you, all yea, flowing from the heart of God and returning

back in grateful acknowledgment and in adoring praises to Him who has so graciously bestowed it. You see something of this in Jer. xxxi. There the prophet, after a glorious description of the goodness and grace of Israel's God, says, "The Lord hath appeared of old," or "from afar unto me." Now there are many of God's children who are blessed with the assurance of understanding, but they cannot lay claim to faith or hope. Ask them, have they any faith? They tell you, No. Ask them, have they any bubbling up of hope within? They shake their head with ominous silence. Ask them, have they any understanding of these things? And you find in a moment they have a spiritual understanding, while they lay no claim to the possession of faith. Yes, as the man sick of the palsy was carried, so you have faith for those weaklings, which faith Jesus owns and acknowledges. They have no hope themselves, you have marvellous hope for them. I know some who at this very moment would not for the life of them say they are in possession of eternal and spiritual realities, yet sometimes I have more hope of them than I have of myself. But it is a blessed thing for us to have a good understanding in the fear of the Lord; and this Jeremiah had when he said, "*The Lord hath appeared.*" He did not say, the Lord does appear, for it was the want of that gracious experience which caused the prophet thus to speak, "*The Lord hath appeared of old unto me;*" but God immediately blessed him with a gracious visit, opened up the riches of His love, and said, "Yea." God's purpose is one thing, the experience of the child is another. Here the child saith, "He hath;" but God saith, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." It is not love yesterday, and withheld to-day. It is love everlasting, invincible, immutable and inexhaustible. "Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee," or "have extended lovingkindness unto thee."

"Yea." Listen to what David saith in his last inspired words: "*Although* my house be not so with God, *yet* He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow." Mark these two words, and may God seal them home to your hearts with saving and precious power. *Although.* That describes what I and my house are in ourselves. *Yet.* That shows forth the unchanging and the unalterable love and affection of a covenant God for His people. He reveals His salvation in a well-ordered covenant—a covenant in which that salvation is performed for that people by the Son, and performed in them by God the ever-blessed Spirit.

II.—HE. Who is this? Now if you search throughout the whole of this precious book of Solomon's Song, you cannot find a name given to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head and Husband of the Church. Only in one place, and that in the original, and not in our translation, does the name of God occur. You will

find it in chap. viii., where she says, "Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm: for love is strong as death; *jealousy is cruel* as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame," or "hath the flames of God." In no part of this book is a name given to the Lord Jesus Christ, nor do you find Him spoken of as Jesus, Lord, Saviour, Emmanuel, or JEHOVAH; but in almost every instance He is set forth by a personal pronoun. You find this at the commencement. "Let *Him* kiss me with the kisses of *His* mouth," as though she expected the persons she was speaking to would perfectly understand her meaning, and would know the person to whom she alluded. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ was All in all to her. But while the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is not mentioned, His form is oftentimes seen, and His love, grace, and affection are oftentimes graciously experienced. Thus, as we look at the personal pronoun *He*, we see the one object of the Church's adoration and affection. The Holy Ghost is pleased to take of the things of Christ and shew them to the adoring gaze of those in spiritual and experimental oneness with Him. And as we come into the contemplation of this, we see Him in deed and in truth, GOD, JEHOVAH. Look at the precious declaration, Psalm xxxv. 10—a rebuke to all Socinians, Unitarians, Arians, and religious infidels, who call into question the Deity, Divinity, and Godhead of our glorious Lord. "All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto Thee?" All the bones of the mystical body of the Lord Jesus Christ shall call Him LORD or JEHOVAH. He was JEHOVAH in His oneness with the Father and the Holy Ghost before the worlds were framed, ay, from the beginning. When was that? None can truly tell. From eternity to eternity He is One with the Father in His eternal power and Godhead. He is Emmanuel, is the declaration of Isaiah, and quoted in Matt. i. 27: "They shall call His name Emmanuel." Infidels have objected to this and have said, Find a portion in the New Testament Scriptures where any one called the Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. We see the stupidity of such a demand as this; it is one which those make who have come to preconceived conclusions, and when dealing with the children of the living God, distress them with their exactions. Ah, my dear friends, when I cannot find a plain and positive Thus saith the Lord, I delight in what that mighty man of valour, the late Wm. Parks, of Openshaw, wrote to me in his last communication from his dying chamber,—

"SPIRIT, NOT LETTER, IS MY MOTTO."

So, according to the spirit of the Word, I judge of any seeming difficulty, and look at any portion which may appear to me vague and ambiguous. Has the Infidel, Socinian, Unitarian, or Arian vantage ground there? I answer, No. "*They shall call His name Emmanuel.*" Who are they? All blessed with the

teaching of His good Spirit—all those in experimental union with Himself—all those who are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation—all those who are brought from death unto life—all those who are spiritually one with Him, do “call His name, Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us.” Who interprets it? God the Holy Ghost. Why does He interpret it? That God Himself may cheer and comfort His people in every place where they are brought in suffering, trial, tribulation, and sorrow.

“*He.*” He is the glorious God over all. See how this is declared in the positive declarations of God’s most Holy Word. Rom. ix. 5: “Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” If there was not another portion in the whole of God’s written Word that declared the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ, this one would be sufficient for me. Now turn to 1 Tim. iii. 14: “Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.” But I don’t wish to look at the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ as an abstract theory set forth in so many plain and positive declarations of the Word: I love to see it in those exhibitions of His Godhead which He gave while here on earth. Look at Him—the very waters which He holds in the hollow of His hand (Isa. xl. 12), these rising by His stormy wind, and calmed by a word dropped into the midst of their fury and their foam from His sacred lips. Look at Him at the well of Samaria; there we see Him conferring eternal life on a poor harlot. Look at Him again after performing a miracle on the poor impotent man at the pool of Bethsaida, in the house of mercy (John v.). The Jews called into question His right to command the man to take up his bed and walk on the Sabbath day; but the man very wisely turned upon them and said, “He that made me whole, said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.” The Being who could make him whole, has a right to make him do what He would on any day of the week, even on the day when punctilious Pharisees and strict Sabbatarians, with a semblance of piety, make marvellous profession of attachment to the old law, while they ignore a covenant God in Christ. Now, if you come to verse 17, the Lord Jesus Christ says, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” As My Father works, so I work. Whatever My Father has wrought, He wrought in Oneness with Me. My Father wrought in creation with Me. My Father works in the perpetual preservation of that which He created, and as the Upholder and Preserver of all things, I work with Him. “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” You see the Jews perfectly understood the letter of the word which flowed from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But He is not only God, He is also Man; and we behold Him

one in our nature, the One who has perfectly identified Himself with us; and in that nature performed everything, which it was an utter impossibility for God, as God, to perform. "With God all things are possible;" but here we find an impossibility. It is an impossibility for God to suffer. The impossibility lay in the fact that God could not bow in obedience to His own righteous law. We see the whole election of grace fallen in Adam, their first federal head. We see the consequence of his sin, suffering, sorrow, enmity in the carnal mind, and the whole life alienated from God. But those eternally loved by God must be brought according to covenant purposes to enjoy the throne and the heart of their God and Father. How must this be done? The law saith, wherever there is sin, there must be death. Wherever sin against an infinite God has been committed, infinite satisfaction is required; and how can this satisfaction be given? Here we behold the glory of JEHOVAH'S grace and the matchless provision of His love in sending His Son into this world, "Bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh;" "Made in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. viii. 3); "Being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 6—8). There we see the Lord Jesus Christ, a Man—a Man in embryo, in the womb of His mother—a Man—child in the arms of His mother; the youth, the lovely youth of Nazareth—"The Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"—the Man, weary and thirsty at Samaria's well—the Man, beaten and bound in Pilate's judgment hall—the Man, weltering in sweat and blood in gloomy dark Gethsemane—the Man suffering and expiring amid the darkness and isolation of Calvary—the Man throughout the whole of His lifetime giving perfect obedience to the law of God, acquiescence to the will of God, and perfect submission to the mind of God. Mark you, not only a Man on earth, but a Man now in the heights of glory!

"This is the Man, the exalted Man  
Whom we unseen adore;  
But when our eyes behold His face,  
Our hearts shall love Him more."

And as Hart says,—

"This wondrous Man, of whom we tell,  
Is true Almighty God."

He is not only God and Man, but in His marvellous union, He is One Christ. Man to suffer, God to save. Man to obey, God to give infinite value to His obedience. As Man to die, but as God to accomplish redemption by His death. As Man, He shed His precious blood, but as God, He gave eternal efficacy and infinite value to the blood which He shed. You find from the

testimony of the Saviour that the altar sanctified the gift presented upon it. So the altar of the perfect Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ perfectly sanctified the gift of His humanity. In His sufferings on the behalf of His people His Divinity gave them eternal, unchanging, and inalienable efficacy and worth, with which as the God-Man He now stands before the throne on your behalf and mine. Look at the way and manner in which the two natures in one Person were revealed in the days of His flesh. You see Him as a weary and thirsty Man sitting on Samaria's well, saying, "Give Me to drink." But He also declares His Godhead in the words, "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living waters." There is the God-Man, one Christ. Look at Him again after a day's hard toil. You, whose limbs are oft-times weary, and whose hands may be hard and horny through your daily labour—you, who sometimes mourn over your hard lot in winning the bread for yourself and those near and dear to you, there is a little comfort and consolation for you in the fact that a precious Christ, from the moment He was set apart for His public work to the moment He entered into heaven's highest glory, ceased not as a labouring Man to work hard for His own. After a day's hard toil He entered into a ship, and being weary with His labour, He fell asleep; the winds rose at the bidding of His God and Father, and the waves of the sea roared, but awoke not a precious Christ. Amid the tempest's roar sounds of distress arose, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" The moment the cry of necessity is heard from the brethren of the Brother born for adversity, He is up in a moment; He speaks, "Peace, be still;" there was a calm—the troubled elements owned Him to be their Ruler and their God. "But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the sea and the wind obey Him?"

But come to the garden, and there we behold Him as Man weltering in blood. He stands before His accusers in all the glory and grandeur of His Godhead, and in all the dignity and worth of His Manhood. He says, "If ye seek Me, let these go their way. They went backward and fell to the ground." The rays of His Godhead peering through the very pores of His Manhood proved too much for those who came out against Him. Again, on Calvary's heights there you see that blessed One of whom it is said, Surely this was a righteous Man. The poor thief said, "Lord, remember me." I do love that prayer of the poor thief; it is fenced with sovereignty at both ends. *Lord and kingdom.* The Lord Jesus Christ immediately answers, "Verily." In the original it is *Amen*. No such *Amen* ever greeted the ears of mortal before. The poor thief, despised and rejected like his Master, is blessed with a response he little expected: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." As Man, dying. As God, bestowing life. gle



Now look at Him in His three sacred offices to which He was graciously anointed and appointed by the Father, by the pouring of the Holy Ghost without measure upon Him—Prophet, Priest, and King. A Prophet, the Communicator of the Father's mind and will to all whom the Father eternally loved, all whom He in His grace and His pity saved, and all those who shall be led into a right understanding and spiritual apprehension of the blessings provided by the Father, preserved by the Son, and communicated by the Holy Ghost.

The Priest to atone, to intercede, and to bless. All these three functions performed by our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "He through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God." There is the priestly act.

"Christ is our Sacrifice! Christ is our Altar!  
Christ is our Mercy-seat sprinkled with blood;  
O ye desponding ones, fear not, nor falter,  
Christ is our Peace in the presence of God."

Christ there to intercede on the behalf of all those whom He has saved. Christ to bless poor souls purchased by His precious blood, and manifested as the fruit of His suffering and death.

Christ is King. Those who call this glorious truth into question are perfectly welcome to their questioning for me. They say Christ is not the King of saints, He is not the King of His people, Christ does not reign now, the devil reigns. But I love the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God to reveal unto me that precious truth, that He must reign until He has put "all enemies under His feet." And as He is a Prophet to me by the communication of His Spirit, as He is a Priest for me at the Father's right hand, so He is King in me by the grace and indwelling of the same Spirit, reigning over my corrupt affections, my carnal lusts, my proud and rebellious will, bringing every imagination into captivity to His sweet law of love.

But *He is* also my Brother born for adversity. For what adversity? For every adversity experienced by the whole of His elect members, and experiencing the full nature of them during His sojourn upon earth, that He might manifest marvellous sympathy with His people in every dark hour, in every trying moment, in every temptation and perplexity which they shall be subject to in suffering oneness with Him.

But not only my Brother born for adversity, *He is* my Surety. To think that I contract debts I never can pay, commit sins which would sink me into a burning hell for ever, and causing me to evade even the nearest and dearest on earth, knowing that these would start and shrink from a sinner so vile, from a being so hateful and depraved; yet the Man Christ Jesus, the Surety of His people, took every sin to Himself, and bore all the consequences of those sins. Yea, He took all the shame, condemnation, death, and damnation to Himself. The very pangs of hell I deserved, a precious Christ willingly and voluntarily

suffered on my behalf. And now, in the sweet consciousness of this, sometimes in prayer and supplication, when I cannot find better words, I approach my God and say—

“Not on me, Lord, not on me,  
I am all iniquity;  
Look on Thine Anointed One,  
Who, before Thy glorious throne,  
On His breast bears my poor name,  
All my load of sin and shame—  
Look on Him, my Surety.”

*He is not only My Surety, but my Head—the Head of all things for me. He is my loving Husband. Oh, to think that He is a Husband who hates putting away! He is a Husband who knows nothing of divorce. He is a Husband who, having loved His own which are in the world, He will love to the end. He is a Husband who loves the wife no less for her infidelity, adultery, and wanderings, but He will cleanse her from all her idols, wean her affections from all her lovers, adorn her in His perfections, and cause her, in love only with Himself, to look Him in the face with the confidence which He Himself inspires, and say, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth I desire beside Thee.”*

Contemplate Him in His person, offices, or relations, we behold Him according to the precious declaration of the text: “Altogether lovely.”

III.—ALTOGETHER means all gathered. When I come to look at the word altogether in reference to Christ, I see all the beauties of heaven, all the excellencies of earth, and all things in nature combining to shew forth the superlative beauties and excellencies of Zion's King and Lord. There is the meekness of the lamb, the innocence of the dove, the majesty of the lion, and all the dignity, grace, or excellency which can be conferred on mortals; all these, from the person of a precious Christ, shine out most gloriously, without tarnish, fault, or any such thing; in the contemplation of this, the child of God cries out, in adoration and wonder, “Yea, *He is altogether lovely.*”

IV.—LOVELY. What are we to understand by that expression? It means that He is amiable, pleasing, and delightful without exception. There is no part in the person of Christ, not a word in the promises of Christ, no act in the performances of Christ, no revelation of the perfections of Christ, in which we can find aught unlovely or undesirable. The word lovely, in one place, means amiable. “How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!” What is the meaning of the word amiable? It is, worthy of love. How worthy is my Christ to me! He is altogether pleasing, altogether delightful. I am moved with spiritual delight, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory in the revelation of His glorious person to my heart. But still more. He is altogether to be desired. There you have the fulness and force of the expression, He is altogether desirable. When? In every time of want, woe, weariness, and wretched-

ness, in every season of sorrow and of suffering, in every necessity I experience, in every perplexity which distresses my mind, in every temptation by which Satan seeks my overthrow, in every assault which may come from hell, or in every accusation, rebuke, and reproof which may come from the malice of men. See! Altogether desirable is my Christ. For if I attempt to deal with opposing principles, either in or out of myself, failure is sure to be mine. But let Christ speak to me and for me, let His sweet voice of love be heard, saying, "Doth no man condemn thee?" I am enabled, by the hope and confidence which His own word inspires, to say, "*No man, Lord.*" He sweetly responds, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." Does the world hate me? I leave its hatred in the hands of my glorious Vindicator. Does Satan assault me? I leave his assaults with Him who alone can manage him. Does my own heart condemn me? My eyes are lifted up to Him who alone can communicate His love—the love of the Father and the love of the Holy Ghost, which casteth out all fear and brings me into the blessed realisation of His unceasing care over me.

"*He is altogether lovely.*" I love to look at the loveliness of my God and Saviour as it appeared in real acts while here on earth. Look at the loveliness of His character—He is the fine flour mingled with oil. Fine flour with oil poured on it. No flaw, no failure, everything perfect. Just notice, and perhaps this may prove to be a word of counsel from His sacred lips to some who have come here to meet Him. Does He feed the multitude with bread and fish? He does it most liberally. No niggardliness in the heart or disposition of Christ. He causes the bread and fishes to multiply in the eaters' hands. Are they filled? He saith, "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." No extravagance there. May we know what it is to prize highly the gifts of a liberal God, while we know what that means—Waste not, want not. Are taxes demanded? Mark you, here is a lesson for some of those miserable political Dissenters—and I speak advisedly when I say this—the sum total of their religion consists in despising dominion, speaking evil of dignities, and objecting to the powers that be which are ordained of God. With such I have no association. I am too much in love with God's Christ for their company to be agreeable to me. When tribute was demanded which could not be lawfully exacted, the meek, lowly, and ever-lovable Jesus said unto Peter: "Nevertheless, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give it unto them for Me and thee" (Matt. xvii. 24—27). When we come to contemplate loveliness so pure, perfect, and free from ostentation, we may well hide our heads for shame, while our adoring hearts cry out: "He is altogether lovely."

May He add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
OCTOBER 12TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."—  
Song of Solomon v. 16.

THE choicest and highest privilege enjoyed, or that can be conferred on favoured mortals here below, is set forth in the words which I have read for our meditation this morning. This is not the language of the cold, calculating formalist or the mere professor who finds his way into the assemblies of the saints or into the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ to profess that which he possesses not, but the glowing language of one who has been brought through many a toil and temptation, through many disheartening scenes and painful visitations, to the enjoyment and company of that glorious One whose presence fills all heaven with joy, His Father's heart with unspeakable delight, and who is the centre of all true spiritual and heart-felt worship amongst His elect and redeemed members here below. Nothing short of His own adorable Person, and that revealed in living and loving communication, will ever truly satisfy the hearts of those who have been brought into spiritual oneness and experimental acquaintance with Himself. You may rest assured that none but those who are acquainted with this experience, can make such a declaration as that which I have read in those precious words. It is not simply to come into the possession of spiritual blessings, bounties, or benefits, neither is it simply to be blessed with what are termed evidences of Divine and spiritual life. I say this because you cannot find such an expression in the whole compass of the New Testament Scriptures. There is nothing about evidences, but the blessed declaration of the Spirit witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, leading us into the knowledge and understanding of what

the Lord Jesus Christ is to His eternally-loved, elect, and redeemed people, and what we are in ourselves by way of contrast—that is, we contrast ourselves with those blessings, bounties, and benefits conferred upon us in God's everlasting covenant of grace, conveyed to us through the person of His Son, and communicated to our hearts by the grace of His indwelling Spirit. For instance, as I am brought into the enjoyment of salvation, I see, know, and feel myself, and that daily and hourly, to be a sinner before Him. I am conscious it must be His work, because I naturally do not want it. I am confident the devil would never work such an experience in my heart as to necessitate the interposition of the Lord Jesus Christ in all that He is and all that He has, so as to meet, to supply, and to satisfy what I experience. His salvation is revealed to me in God's blessed Word and opened up to me by the Spirit of the living God, and I am brought into the knowledge, understanding, and realisation of what I am in His sacred presence. Nothing short of that experience expressed by the apostle Paul: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15), can be expressed by me before the throne of grace. But as the child of God looks by way of contrast from salvation by Jesus Christ to sin in himself, he is brought into a knowledge of that glorious truth, that salvation as a work will not meet the deep and untold necessities which he experiences; but salvation in Christ's glorious Person. Not Jesus doing something to save me, but Jesus my Saviour saving me; my Jesus is my salvation. Wherever I am, whatever be my sins, sufferings, or sorrows, Jesus Himself is my salvation. This is the testimony flowing from the exercised hearts of His children whose histories are recorded in this Book; for instance, "The Lord is my life and my salvation" (Psa. xxvii. 1); "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Psa. xxxv. 3). Again, I experience spiritual necessity day by day; what will satisfy my waiting and wanting heart? It is the precious declaration, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." But it is not simply the supplying of all my need by Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ Himself God's supply for all my need. It is Jesus Himself who meets every necessity and every requirement I may know in my heart's experience as a child of God, whether it be wandering in the wilderness, longing for His power and glory as seen in the sanctuary, seated at His table amongst His guests, or at His feet longing to learn His will—nothing but Himself as my Salvation, my Teacher, my Lord, my All in all, will satisfy the necessities and the cravings of that nature which He has implanted within.

But here is the mercy of mercies to the true-born child of God, to be able to look up and in the midst of all the conflict

which may be raging around or within ; in the face of all the doubts, the fears, and anxieties which oftentimes trouble and distract the mind, in the midst of all the gloom and darkness peculiar to true spiritual pilgrimage here below, to be able to make use of that blessed and precious personal pronoun, *My*. *My Beloved*, *my Friend*. Now, if you commence with the first verse of this blessed book of Solomon's Song and go on to the last, you will find in every place and position that nothing will truly gratify or satisfy the bride—the Church—but Himself. What does this teach you and me? If we are led and guided by God the ever-blessed Spirit into a true apprehension of His mind and will in this blessed book, we are taught that nothing, however good, excellent, great, or glorious, will meet the necessities of our case, "Nothing but Christ will do." We may have a pure pulpit, a faithful preacher, a convenient and comfortable place of worship, and a hymn book full of free-grace hymns—we may have an open Bible, and you may hear utterances clear, lucid, and unmistakable to circumcised ears—you may have all that and yet retire from this place with feelings of bitter disappointment, disappointed with the preacher, the place, and the people, and above all, disappointed with your own wretched selves. No, my dear friends, I speak what I know, and testify of that which I have seen, handled, and felt, that with all the blessings of His providence and His grace with which He may surround us and in which He may lead us, dissatisfaction and discontent will be and must be our lot as long as we remain in the land of far distances from Him, and while He is pleased to hide His face from us ; but it is only as He shews us His feet, His hands, His side, and His once thorn-crowned brow, and as He opens up the love of His heart and communicates the same by the power of His ever-blessed Spirit, that we retire from each other's company with gratification and satisfaction, that none but those in spiritual and experimental oneness with Him can ever for a moment truly understand.

Look, then, at this precious personal pronoun, *My*. I may be able to speak of *my* place of worship, *my* companions in Church membership, *my* pastor, or *my* Bible ; but this is the point, what about the blessed declarations, *My Lord*, *my God*, *my Salvation*, *my Beloved*, *my Friend*? Are we able to make use of that personal pronoun? Some of us with that spiritual chastity with which He has blessed us, and with intense honesty in His solemn and sacred presence, may feel it presumptuous to make use of such words as these ; we doubt and we question our right to utter such a blessed expression even in His hearing, or in the hearing of those near and dear to us. He alone can decide the doubtful case working in our desolate hearts, and whatever may be the darkness and gloom of the poor, tried, and tempted child of the living God, he shall be brought by the Spirit's teaching to own in the most unlikely spots his relation-

ship to a covenant God in Christ and of a covenant God's relationship to him. This was the case with our great and glorious Head, as you see in those precious words—words of terrible import, which flowed from His agonised soul on Calvary's hill: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" A portion in God's most blessed Word which truly opens the state and condition of the Redeemer's soul is found in John xii. 27, where He says, "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say?" The soul of the Redeemer was filled with trouble, dismay, and distraction, to such an extent, that caused Him to utter these remarkable words, "*What shall I say?*" Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I to this hour." Crying for salvation, but it is with the word *Father* on His lips. Longing for the joy of His presence, but it is with the expression, "My God," flowing from His exercised heart. Was this peculiar to Zion's King and Lord, the Surety of the covenant, the Substitute of His people at that time? No, for each and every one of them were one with Him in that dread moment. I love those glorious words of good old John Kent:—

"Hail, sacred union, firm and strong !  
 How rich the grace ! how sweet the song !  
 That rebel worms should ever be  
 One with Incarnate Deity.  
 One in the tomb ; one when He rose ;  
 One when He triumph'd o'er His foes ;  
 One when in heaven He took His seat,  
 While seraphs sang all hell's defeat."

One with a precious Christ, even in His childhood at Bethlehem, during His youth at Nazareth, through His life of public suffering, privation, and distress, on the cursed tree when He hung as the curse of God on the behalf of those who are eternally one with Him. And even at this time oneness and identity seen in each, and that by the eye of Him who handed them over to the Son for His safe keeping and for their eternal salvation, preservation, and glorification. In every trial, temptation, and tribulation experienced by the Lord Jesus Christ, we find oneness to His people, and that oneness to be demonstrated in their own souls during their sojourn in these wilderness wilds, from the first moment of regenerating grace to that period, when, divested of the flesh, the redeemed spirit enters into His presence, freed from all sin, corruption, anxiety, and care, to worship Him for ever and ever. Look at the glorious declaration in Isa. xlix. 14: "But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Whose words are these? Those of the whole Church of the living God, and of every member in spiritual union with the Lord Jesus Christ, who at one time or other must be brought to experience in some measure the pangs of spiritual desertion. But look at that precious personal pronoun *My* in the confession or acknowledgment; it is, "*The Lord hath forsaken*

me;" and "*My Lord, my Governor, my Husband hath forgotten me.*" Had He? Not truly so, but in feeling and experimental realisation by the child of the living God; hence the confession, "*My Lord hath forgotten me.*"

But it is ours to notice how this covenant relationship sprang into existence as far as the child of God, the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ, is concerned. I don't ask when this covenant relationship began, because I am one of those who believe that the relationship between Christ and His people, between the Bridegroom and the bride, between the Head and the member, between the Redeemer and the redeemed, never had a beginning. But the question may be asked, How sprang this spiritual union and covenant relationship into existence? As we look at ourselves in the clear water of God's most Holy Word, where face oftentimes answereth to face, and the children of the living God are brought into sweet and blessed communion with Himself, we shall find everything according to the declaration of the apostle Paul; in Eph. ii. 1—3, where he describes the true state and condition by nature of all those who stand in eternal oneness and unchanging relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "Dead in trespasses and in sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Again, Titus iii. 8: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, malice, and envy, hateful and hating one another." Anything there in the shape of covenant and spiritual relationship to Him, or that loving and fond affection beaming forth in the character of these persons? None whatever; but evidences of distance from JEHOVAH according to that strong declaration given in Eph. iv. 18, 19: "Past feeling and alienated from the love of God." "But," says the apostle in Eph. ii. 4, "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." There we have the secret: it is JEHOVAH'S everlasting, eternal, free, uninfluenced, immutable, and inexhaustible love. There is the secret of the union of any poor wretched worm of the earth with Incarnate Deity. There is the precious secret of our being found this morning within these walls seeking His face, and longing for blessed and hallowed communion, fellowship, and intercourse with Him. It is because the Lord has designs of eternal and unchanging



mercy toward us in His everlasting covenant of grace—because He handed our persons over to our great and glorious Head before the worlds were framed—because the Lord Jesus Christ, in His lovingkindness and tender mercy, took us to Himself—and because He has been pleased to reveal, by the power, grace, and indwelling of His Spirit, that love of His which can know no change, and so beautifully expressed in those words of Kelly's,—

“Zion's Friend in nothing alters,  
Though all others may, and do ;  
His is love that never falters,  
Always to its object true.  
Happy Zion,  
Crowned with mercies ever new.”

We have desires after Him because of the covenant purposes of the Father revealed in the great and glorious Covenantee; it is only by the covenant Comforter and Teacher, God the ever-blessed Spirit, that we are brought this morning in experimental oneness with the bride, to look up with a little hope bubbling up in the heart, and to say, “This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend.”

Now notice again, and I cannot impress this too much on your mind, it is not what the Lord Jesus Christ has, as much as what the Lord Jesus Christ is, that endears Him to the hearts of His people. It is said in His blessed Word, “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.” Let me ask you which is the most precious part of that declaration of the apostle Paul? This is the most precious when brought home to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost—“*Ye are Christ's*,” more than “*all are yours*,” for all things being mine, the bitters are mine as well as the sweets; desertion mine as well as the joys of His presence; pains are mine as well as the pleasures. But “*ye are Christ's*”—brings me to His loved embrace, leads me to sit at His feet, to learn His will, and to lean on His bosom to experience the outflowing and inflowing of His love, giving me to know that in Him, with Him, by Him, and through Him I stand perfect and complete in the presence of my God. In Him, no condemnation; from Him, no separation. It is His sacred person which alone can cheer, comfort, and console the hearts of His tried and tempted ones. Look at the relationship which exists between the two persons, the one speaking, and the One spoken of; Head and members; Husband and wife; Bridegroom and bride. As we are brought to contemplate all earthly loves, we see change and sometimes decay, and in the loving and confiding one there are oftentimes pangs of bitter disappointment, because of hope fondly nourished soon blighted. We read of those whose hearts have been fixed on one object; that love, true and pure of God's own begetting, has been placed on an

object not worthy of the same. Let me ask you, When the time is come for the discovery of love's requital so base, and of pretensions so sordid, where is joy, peace, or happiness? Mark you, a well-furnished house, and, to look at, all that can make home happy. But one thing is lacking. What is the house without the heart? And I ask you, What is the so-called house of God without the heart of God? What is the so-called sanctuary without the presence of the loving Bridegroom? What are all the services of a true-born child of God without the presence of the Spirit, the person of Jesus, and the experience of the Father's love? Nothing but a toil, a task, and bitter disappointment. But, my dear friends, with a house of the Father's providing, with the provision of the Father's preparing, with the love of the Son's possessing, and with the perfections of the Spirit's revealing, the bride is brought to cry out in the very ecstasy of her soul, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

"*This is my Beloved.*" Is it possible that any of us can look up with hearts sincere and honest in the presence of Him with whom we have to do, and say, "*This is my Beloved?*" Then the question may be pressed home to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, How came He to be thy Beloved? We read in his precious book, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine: He feedeth among the lilies" (chap. vi. 3). "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me" (chap. vii. 10). Just look at that: "He is all my salvation, and all my desire" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). When I am not in experimental possession of His person, or in the enjoyment of His love, my desire is toward Him. We see this in many portions of God's blessed Word, especially in the Psalms. Let this one suffice: "O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek thee" (Psa. lxxiii. 1)—that is, when the sun rises in the cold grey of the spiritual morning, when the sun begins to shed its beams on the land of Divine revelation, spiritual promise, and covenant relationship, then, *I will seek Thee*. At a distance, yet the relationship realised. In darkness, yet oneness sweetly and blessedly experienced.

"*My Beloved.*" How came He to be my Beloved? Is it because of what I am to Him? What I have done for Him? What I am doing for His saints? Is it because of anything in or of myself? No, not for a moment. As we contemplate our own love, the love which we have to Him, we may well sigh in the language of Dr. Watts:

"Dear Lord! and shall we ever live  
At this poor dying rate?  
Our love so faint, so cold to Thee  
And Thine to us so great?"

There is the experience and the realisation of His great love wherewith He hath loved us, even when we were dead in

trespasses and in sin. His love is free, without money, and without price. His love is uninfluenced.

"There was nothing in us that could merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight;  
'Twas 'Even so, Father!' we ever must sing,  
For so it seem'd good in Thy sight."

Nothing whatever in us to draw forth His love; but everything to draw down His eternal hatred and abhorrence, and to have banished us with everlasting destruction from His presence and His glory. But His was love immutable—that is, love which knows no change:

"Although the Lord of earth and sky  
Knew what we all would prove,  
He on our Surety kept His eye,  
And rested in His love."

It is inexhaustible. The saints, from Abel's day to the present time, have been receiving from the full free fountain of eternal love. It is ever free and overflowing. Yes, the same inexhaustible fountain to-day. JEHOVAH loves as much at this moment as He did when first He took us to His loved embrace, when He gave us a place in His loving heart, when He wrote our names in His own book of life, and when He first whispered to our wondering hearts, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." We rejoice in the fact that His love is uninfluenced, immutable, and inexhaustible. How came we into the experimental possession of the same? Not by the wit of our heads, the affection of our hearts, the strength of our arms, or the zeal of our spirits. All these vain notions He swept away and brought us into the rich realisation of the fact that He loves because He will love us, and gives no account of His matters to any outside the pale of His grace.

"*This is my Beloved.*" JEHOVAH is pleased from various portions of His most Holy Word, and by His blessed Spirit, to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ to us in His covenant relationship as the Head of all influence, power, and motion. He is the Head of all blessing, service, and enjoyment. We are delighted as we are brought into the knowledge of the glorious truth that the head is the source of all action to the members, and rules every part of the body. Blessed be His holy name, He is all that to His Church. The head thinks for the members, and so it is the glorious privilege of the bride to know that her Husband has thoughts of love and peace, and not of evil, towards her continually. It is the head which speaks for the whole body, so our great and glorious Head is He who ever speaks and intercedes in the presence of His Father for His own. It was He who spoke in covenant for them<sup>9</sup> before the worlds were framed. It was He who spake in the days of His flesh, and it is

He who now communicates, by the grace and power of His own Spirit, the beauties of His own person, and the love of His heart to the waiting heart of His bride, the Church.

"*This is my Beloved.*" It is He who saw my deep distress, witnessed my terrible ruin, was cognizant of all my failings, and conscious of all my temptations, and yet out of pure love came to the spot of every one of them. There is not a spot of temptation, trial, and trouble, that a child of God can experience, but a precious Christ went into the very spot voluntarily and experimentally in the days of His flesh. It is of God's mercy I know that this Beloved One went down to the lowest parts of the earth on my behalf, ay, went there for me, to save me, and in God's own time to graciously sympathise with me, granting to me those consolations that can only flow from a heart that has felt the same toil and tribulation, and experienced the same buffeting and affliction from the hand of God, men, and devils. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Beloved of His Church. He knows her as espoused by the Father to Him, and sees her standing in eternal and unchanging oneness with Him. The glorious truth holds good, that in her union with Him she has lost her identity, responsibility, and name. Just think of it. I do not understand how any free-willer or fleshly-worker can possibly make use of such an expression of praise and adoration as that found in our text: "*This is my Beloved,*" or, *This is my Husband.* Because He has held Himself responsible for all her debts, and to meet all the demands of law and justice; responsible to face all the malignity, enmity, and wrath of hell; responsible to enter the dark cloud of judgment, and to experience the hiding of His Father's face. Ah! my dear friends, here we have love, matchless, inconceivable, and unutterable. Better felt than expressed, the true-born child of God can say. In purest love He took every sin of mine—past, present, and to come—and put them all away by the shedding of His precious blood, and endured the suffering and desertion which I so richly deserved. Not only this, but gives me to know that it is not so much my knowledge as His identity with me that will suit me in every time of trial and tribulation, cheer and comfort my heart in the hour or article of death, and will be my joy and rejoicing through a never-ending eternity. Well, then, may I say, *This is my Beloved Husband.* He in whose love I am truly lost.

"Lost in Godhead, love, and blood,  
I stray a pilgrim in a wood  
With Jesus crucified;  
Forgetting seasons, times, and years,  
The sun, the moon, the rolling stars,  
And everything beside."

And in the sweet experience of my identity with Him, my heart rejoices in those precious words, which none but the truly-awakened, quickened, and taught child of God can say:

"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth I desire besides Thee." Not only the loss of identity, but the loss of the name. As the wife loses her maiden name at her marriage, so in the marriage of the Church with Christ, and of every individual child of God to the great and glorious Head, the name is lost. What is my name by nature? Sinner. What is my name by grace? Saint, in union with Him who is the Saint or the Separated One indeed. What is my name by nature? Rebel—a rebel against His authority, against His law, against His love, against His Word, and against His people. What is my name now? Hephzibah. What is that? JEHOVAH-JESUS says, "My delight is in her." What is my name by nature? Transgressor from the womb. What is my name by grace? "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." Just think that this is the name of every child of God in living and loving union with Him; and with an experience such as this, the true-born child, the bride of the Lamb, may well cry out, "*This is my Beloved.*" Now look at the last declaration:—

*"This is my Friend."*

A friend in this world of envy, jealousy, suspicion, oppression, deceit, and falsehood, is worth having. We love those with whom we enjoy hallowed communion, confidence, and intimacy. Where true friendship exists between two persons, there must also of necessity be knowledge, intimacy, and confidence between them. Sometimes we are led, in our simplicity, to confide without wisdom the very inmost secrets of our soul in reference to our affairs and circumstances. But we pass away from this to the contemplation of the spiritual and heavenly; away from earthly friends to the one Friend, to that friendship which is uninterrupted and eternal; and as our heart bubbles up with joy and gratitude, we can sing with the spirit and with the understanding also:—

"Poor, weak, and worthless though I am,  
I have a rich, Almighty Friend:  
Jesus, the Saviour, is His name;  
He freely loves, and without end."

Yes, we can sing in the language of Swaine:—

"A Friend there is—your voices join,  
Ye saints, to praise His name."

Is He a Friend? Indeed and in truth He is, according to the precious declaration in Prov. xviii. 24: "A Man that hath friends must shew himself friendly"—a portion often quoted as having reference to the varied relationship in life, but to me it has no reference to earthly friends. It is "A Man." And it is that Man of whom we can sing:—

"The Man who liv'd, and died, and rose,  
To perfume heaven with blood;  
To Him my soul her pardon owes,  
And claims Him for her God."

There high He reigns in ether bright,  
The Great Incarnate Word,  
While suns to darkness dwindle quite  
Before their radiant Lord.

Thence low He stoops to watch the lot  
Of souls to Him once given ;  
And makes the dying sinner's cot  
The glorious gate of heaven."

There is the friendship of the Man, who in the purpose of JEHOVAH stood forth and said : " In the volume of the Book it is written of Me, to do Thy will, O My God." He took His Church, His bride, and securely holds her in His loving embrace, and there she ever remains amid all the changes, perplexities, and anxieties of this mortal life ; nay, down into gloomy, dark Gethsemane He went, and to the height of Calvary, never parting from her for a single moment, and never ceasing His labours of love until He could cry to fill all heaven with delight, all hell with dismay, and the hearts of His saints with joy and unceasing pleasure, " It is finished."

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Friend. But how does He manifest His friendship ? It has pleased Him, by the foolishness of preaching, to make known the mind and will of His Father, according to Paul's declaration in Titus i. 2, 3 : " In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began ; but hath in due time manifested His Word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." The revelation of this glorious truth, the manifestation of the hope of eternal life, and the promises of JEHOVAH-JESUS for His Church before the worlds were framed, are so great, grand, and glorious, that we can scarcely believe them. The Church may well say, " This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend." Through the preaching of His Word, He seeks, finds, and says to His loved one, " Thou art My beloved, and thou art My friend, to whom I will confide all that the Father hath entrusted to Me, all the secrets of My house, all the love of My heart, all the treasures of My kingdom, all the glory of My throne, and all the splendours of My crown."

But look with me at what has appeared to very many a mysterious portion of God's Word—Hosea iii. 1, 3 : " Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love flagons of wine. And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days ; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man ; so will I also be for thee." Some commentators have said, Strange and mysterious that the Lord should give such a command to His prophet to marry an adulteress ; but the glorious and spiritual truth couched beneath these words causes the heart to thrill with spiritual joy and thankfulness to Him with whom we have to do. Paul knew something of this when

he confessed (2 Cor. xi. 2), "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Here JEHOVAH-JESUS gives His commission to the prophet, to go forth and to declare the Church eternally spotless; the Church's eternal betrothment; the Church's eternal marriage to the King's Son.

"When sunk in sin He'll not disown  
Those sacred ties that made her His,  
But claim this partner of His throne  
Through floods of wrath and deep distress."

Elect, redeemed, and regenerate souls are those to whom God's sent ministers are spiritually wedded, for mark you, there is a spiritual wedding and a heavenly marriage unknown to professors existing between the God-sent minister and his people. But who is this Friend? It is JEHOVAH-JESUS. He commands His prophet: "Go love that woman." But, Lord, see what an adulteress she is; see how she is wandering from Thee, and how she is sinning against Thee. The Lord will stop the mouths of such an one; He knows all about the wanderings of His own poor bride, her corruptions, and her adulteries. "Go yet, love a woman," loved with an everlasting love, though she is an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord. I ask you to read Psalm lxxviii., Nehemiah ix., Psalm cvi., and Jeremiah iii. There you see an adulterous and idolatrous people, and a God of sovereign, uninfluenced, immutable, and inexhaustible love. "And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man; so will I also be for thee." So every God-sent minister who will wed souls to a precious Christ in the bands of blessed experience by the power of the Holy Ghost, will declare to every gracious soul, "*Thou shalt not be for another man*"—only for the Man, Christ Jesus, as He is pleased to reveal Himself in His own glorious testimony, as He is pleased to open up His beauties, His bounties, and His blessings by the power, grace, and indwelling of His blessed Spirit. This, then, is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, He who hath shewn Himself friendly in covenant before the worlds were framed; in incarnation, in coming down to the lowest depths of the earth; in His redeeming work, in the shedding of His precious blood; in His ascension with great glory and triumph into heaven, there to appear in the presence of the Father for her whom He loves; there to disperse the blessings of His grace; there to communicate the love of His heart; there to win her affection, setting them on Himself, and on things above, and to give her the blessed assurance and realisation in her heart of an interest in that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for her, prepared by the Father from the foundations of the world, and possessed by Himself through time and through a never-ending eternity for her everlasting possession. May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## ZION'S GATEKEEPERS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
JULY 18TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in."—Isa. xxvi. 2.

WE are told in the preface at the commencement of this chapter that the words of my text form part of "*A song inciting to confidence in God.*" As we read the chapter with spiritual intelligence, and by the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, we cannot fail to see much that is calculated to strengthen our faith, confirm our hope, and unite our love in the one Object of heaven's worship, and the redeemed sinner's delight. It has been our privilege on recent Sunday mornings to meditate upon the personal beauties and excellencies of our Lord Jesus Christ as portrayed in chap. v. of Solomon's Song. The reason why I have diverged from the course of expositions on that precious Scripture is simply because of our entering upon the 60th anniversary of the opening of Grove Chapel. Sixty years ago therestood in this place a man who passed through much persecution and contention, but who, by the grace of his God, brought to a successful issue the work of erecting this place for the worship and service of JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As he surveyed the completion of the work, with a grateful and adoring heart he prayed that the eye and heart of his covenant God might be upon this place perpetually. He thus asked that there might never be a time when the worshippers of the great and sovereign JEHOVAH should be lacking within these walls. His prayer has been answered. His desire has been fulfilled. Earnest, anxious, spiritual worshippers come to this spot to hear their covenant God and Father glorified, their covenant God and Saviour exalted, and their covenant God and Comforter honoured. Throughout this country, and



to earth's remotest bounds God's omniscient eye beholds those who drew their first breath of spiritual life under this roof, who received as little children the spiritual kingdom of God, and fell under the powerful and irresistible grace of that great and glorious Saviour who was then exalted, extolled, and lifted very high in the faithful testimony of the highly-honoured Joseph Irons.

Sixty years have passed away, during which time Satan has done his utmost to chase God's truth and people from this place; but, God is greater than the devil. My spirit is filled with wonder and amazement when I consider how I have been kept, and taught, and brought to stand in this spot before God and His living people to declare the same glorious truths, to open up the same mysteries of electing, redeeming, and regenerating love, and to be the instrument in God's hand for the comforting, consoling, and building up of some of His poor children. In connection with the present circumstances I have been led to direct your minds this morning to a suitable portion of the good old Book, which contains in its unfoldings this oft-repeated testimony,—

"The only Gospel we can own  
Sets Jesus Christ upon His throne:  
Proclaims salvation full and free,  
Obtain'd on Calvary's rugged tree."

This is a purely evangelical chapter appertaining to New Testament times. Some, who do not enjoy the liberty of the children of God which is opened up and revealed to the election of grace, even in the midst of abounding error, superstition, and idolatry, may be allotting the events recorded here to a future dispensation; but, as I have told you before, my soul loves to revel in present realities. Peter, writing to the elect strangers, says, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, *and be established in the present truth*" (2 Peter i. 12). This is truth revealed to our present necessity, and communicated by the Holy Ghost, causing our hearts to rejoice in the assurance of His love, and the sweet hope than when He has perfected His designs of love, grace, and mercy in our hearts' experience, He will receive us into His everlasting habitation, where we shall praise Him with unsinning hearts, without doubt, fear, or amazement. Yes, this is truly an evangelical chapter. It contains blessings rich and rare for those who are brought by the power of Divine grace into the spiritual land of Judah, the land of Divine revelation, spiritual promise, and covenant relationship, to sing with their voice and make melody in their hearts before Him. These have a glorious theme for their rejoicing: "We have a strong city." This is Zion, God's city, of which the Psalmist sang so sweetly: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." And in the immediate context, "The LORD loveth the gates of Zion

more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Again, in Psa. xlviii. you read, "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the North, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of Thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death."

"*We have a strong city.*" It is not *we shall have*, but "*we have a strong city.*" We know that when we have done with time, we shall have a glorious one without bulwarks or fortifications. We desire a better than any this sinful earth can provide—that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called our God: for He hath prepared for us a city (Heb. xi. 16). "*We look for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*" (Heb. xi. 10). This heavenly city was prepared by the Father, and is possessed by the Son for all the seed-royal of heaven. In it they shall sit down with the King in His throne as sharers of His majesty, glory, and kingdom. But the heavenly city differs from that of our text. One is upon earth, the other is in heaven. One is Zion militant, the other is Zion triumphant. Here all the citizens are surrounded with sin, death, and hellish foes. Yonder they are far removed from every opposing power, according to the sweet declaration of Kelly,—

"Oh, what pleasures there await us;  
There the tempests cease to roar:  
There it is that those who hate us  
Shall molest our peace no more;  
Trouble ceases  
On that tranquil, happy shore."

The Canaanite shall not dwell in that land. Near its gates the accursed Amalekite shall never be seen. "The twelve gates are twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl" (Rev. xxi. 21). "And the gates shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there" (Rev. xxi. 25). These gates are not ajar, but wide open for the free and uninterrupted admission, to the abounding glory within, of every elect, redeemed, and regenerate sinner who has spent his allotted time upon earth. Look at the dimensions of the heavenly city. It is foursquare. "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." Twelve thousand furlongs (Rev. xxi. 16). What will those say to this who are perpetually contending for a literal interpretation of a spiritual Book? Where are the pearls to be found of which these gates are formed? We may rest assured that God has precious instruction and spiritual consolation couching beneath all these metaphors, to be communicated to His living

children in His own time. The gates of the city alluded to in Isa. xxvi. are shut. But they must be opened to all who have right to the tree of life and to enter into the city. This brings us to notice for a short time this morning the precious words of our text. May we be privileged to see light in God's light (Psa. xxxvi. 9), and be blessed with the grace and guidance of His Spirit.

"Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in."

I.—THE GATEKEEPERS—"Open ye."

II.—THE GATES—"Open ye the gates."

III.—THE GRACIOUS PRIVILEGES—"That the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in."

I.—THE GATEKEEPERS—"Open ye." It is a marvellous mercy to be spiritually acquainted with these highly-privileged and honoured persons. It has pleased God, in the riches of His grace and goodness, to separate to Himself certain persons in His Church who shall be heralds of His will, proclaimers of His truth, and leaders or guides of His people. These He will bring prominently forward to declare faithfully, fearlessly, and firmly His mind, His message, His Word. Mark well that personal pronoun, *His*. Those whom God commissions to preach His Gospel are not to parade their own whims and notions, frames and feelings. Ofttimes their frames and feelings run counter to the blessings a gracious God has designed to fulfil in them. For instance, this very morning, had I been left to act according to my fleshly feelings, I should not have taken one step toward this pulpit, but should have left it for another to have stood here. It is not mine to act according to my frames and feelings, but according to the Word of the Lord, though it be dead against them. It is not mine to deal out my own ideas or opinions, but the mind of my God which He graciously reveals to me, and in me. It is my blessed lot, as one of JEHOVAH'S sent servants, to preach His Word, to declare His counsel, to publish His decrees, and to proclaim His glorious salvation. It has pleased Him to separate to Himself certain persons in the Church, and distinguish them from the rest of His people as under-shepherds, watchmen, guides, and leaders. If you will turn to that glorious resurrection and ascension Psalm, the 68th, you will read, at the 10th verse: "Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: Thou, O God, hast prepared of Thy goodness for the poor." Again, at the 17th verse: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, Thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." The rebellious! Who are they? The very same persons mentioned in the 6th verse: "God setteth the solitary in families: He bringeth out

those which are bound with chains; but *the rebellious dwell in a dry land.*" Though they are rebellious, and experience the effects of their rebelliousness, He will never leave them nor forsake them. He has an abundance of gifts treasured up, in the person of the Man Christ Jesus, for them; and He will dwell among them, to secure the communication of them to those for whom they were designed. This produces an exclamation of adoring gratitude as we read, at the 19th verse: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." Now, what are these benefits? Turn with me to Eph. iv. 7, and you see in a moment. The apostle, quoting from this very Psalm, says: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill, or fulfil, all things.) And He gave"—here He loads His people with spiritual benefits—"And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." When our Lord Jesus Christ rose again from the dead, He said to His disciples who were with Him on resurrection-ground: "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49). They tarried at Jerusalem, but in tarrying, I believe through their fleshly impatience, they went before the Spirit in *their choice* of Matthias in the room of Judas. The choice of an apostle was not theirs, but God's. I know it is the custom in some places to flatter and bolster up the people with that cursed hell-cry: "*Vox populi, vox Dei*"—"The voice of the people is the voice of God." That infidel cry filled France with anarchy and blood. The voice of the people is ever contrary to that of God, and to the voice of the Holy Ghost in the heart of the living in Jerusalem. Even what is styled the voice of the Church is almost sure to be contrary to the will and Word of God. But the disciples tarried at Jerusalem until the day of Pentecost, when they were endued with power from on high. Men sent out to declare God's mind and will in the salvation of His covenant people must have a Divine commission. We see this in Acts xiii. 2: "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereto I have called them." To all who are thus Divinely called to the work of the ministry, the Holy Ghost will reveal those glorious truths which Paul spake in the presence of Agrippa, recorded in Acts xxvi. 16—18: Jesus said unto him, "Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose,

to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people." What an odd thing! Sent to them, yet delivered from them. It is a marvellous mercy for a minister of Christ to know that the great Head of the Church has revealed Himself unto him as his own God, Redeemer, Saviour, Brother, and Friend, and delivered him from all human authority, power, dominion, and domineering, thus making him subject to Him alone. "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes"—testimonially and as God's instrument—"to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." Sanctifying faith in Paul's case was not so much in himself as in his Head, and was communicated to him at those very times when it was feelingly and experimentally needed.

God's sent servants are commissioned, qualified, and named as pleaseth Him. Notice the variety of their titles: ministers, stewards, messengers, labourers, watchmen, and—wondrous title!—"THE GLORY OF CHRIST" (2 Cor. viii. 23).

1. *Ministers.* Here I would place on record that I have no desire to be styled a pastor according to the popular idea of what a pastor should be. I feel I have no right to assume that title, for I find myself utterly insufficient in this matter: but I long to be—and He has given me very blessed evidence again and again that I am made to some of His own—"a minister of Christ." Some have the hardihood to affirm that a one man ministry—that is, one man as a minister or pastor settled over a Church—is contrary to the mind and will of God. I have no desire to have anything to do with that party. I shun and dread them as much as I do the accursed sacerdotalism and priestcraft of the Romish, Greek, and Anglican confederacies. But a *one man ministry* is a Divine institution, and by it the great and glorious Head has been pleased to feed, instruct, strengthen, and establish the little hills of His Zion here and there in the midst of this naughty world. Each of the seven Churches in Asia had its angel, bishop, or overseer. Paul left Titus at Crete to ordain elders in every city (Titus i. 5). I know it is a lamentable fact that many occupy pastoral offices who have no more idea of ruling a Church than a Zulu would have. Why is this? Because they are ever ready to listen to what some grumbling old gentleman or murmuring old lady has to say. It will be well for murmurers and complainers to keep a distance from me. Those who attempt to rule Churches by their own wit, wisdom, or experience, are sure to meet with miserable failure. I can tell you where is the best spot to manage and govern a Church! Bending lowly, with a broken

and melted heart at the footstool of sovereign mercy, in pure dependence upon a precious Christ for all things.

"Sweet in the confidence of faith  
To trust His firm decrees;  
Sweet to lie passive in His hands,  
And know no will but His."

Such a spirit will find its way, by the power of the Holy Ghost, from the pulpit to the pews. As the minister who distrusts himself proclaims the riches of electing, redeeming, and regenerating grace, unfurls the glorious standard of JEHOVAH'S everlasting love, upon which the eye of faith sees inscribed in shining characters the names of those places where marvellous victories have been achieved by the Captain of our salvation, the hearts of God's elect are cheered and comforted. We will notice this honourable name given by the Holy Ghost to Zion's gatekeepers—*Ministers*. They are styled "*Ministers of the Word*" (Luke i. 2); "*the ministers of Christ*" (1 Cor. iv. 1); "*ministers of the New Testament*" (2 Cor. iii. 6); "*the ministers of God*" (2 Cor. vi. 4). What is a minister? He is one whom the Master has graciously singled out from the rest of His servants to do His bidding in respect to the wants, necessities, and infirmities of His household. He is one who is taught to be anxious to wait upon the weak, the weary, and the infirm in God's family, and minister to them that supply which He has graciously entrusted to them. In Col. i. 7, you read of "Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ." What an honourable distinction! "*A faithful minister of Christ.*" He is one who is not contented with contending for the truth of God in the letter of the doctrines of grace, but one to whom God has given to experience his place in the one body as a suffering member of the now glorified Head, to be brought into deep places to learn his nothingness, and into high places to enjoy his portion in fulness of grace and of glory abounding in Christ Jesus, and thus go forth as an instructor and guide of God's appointing. Those whom God brings into His Church to attend upon the sick, strengthen the weak, and console the disconsolate, will find that their service ceases not with the public ministrations. The work of a faithful minister of Christ is not finished for the day with the end of the sermon, or the pronouncing of the benediction, for oftentimes wearisome and wakeful nights are his lot. Then he remembers upon his bed many of God's tried and tempted ones, and names them to the Master, that they may be blessed with association, communion, and fellowship with a covenant God in Christ. I love to be a minister of Christ, and to minister for Christ. As a faithful one, I shall endeavour, with all the wisdom and strength He bestows upon me, to meet the necessities of the old sheep as well as those of the lambs. The commission which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to Peter is still in force: "Feed My lambs,

Feed my sheep." That is a delicate and difficult position for a faithful minister of Christ. I know and feel it to be so. In a congregation like this, there is a variety of experience. One child of God is in the depth of soul trouble, while another is soaring away on the wings of faith and love, and with a freedom from care and trouble. One would have me to be incessantly preaching his experience, feelings, and frames; but God will not have His servant always grovelling in the mire of human corruptions, and wholly occupied with the little ones to the neglect of those who can be satisfied with nothing short of the strong meat and wine of God's everlasting covenant. As a faithful minister of Christ, I shall know what it is to "serve the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations" (Acts xx. 19), while I cling tenaciously to the injunction, "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (1 Cor. vii. 23).

2. *Stewards.* See 1 Cor. iv. 1: "Stewards of the mysteries of God." What is a steward? He is one who manages the concerns of a family, institution, or estate. He has the arrangement of the provision department in his trust, and has a general oversight over his employer's business affairs. So God's ministers are entrusted with the mysteries of God, and it is their delight to bring forth out of the treasury of the Word and their heart's experience, things new and old for the refreshment, nourishment, and comfort of the Church of God, over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers. Now here comes a question, and you may rest assured it is oftentimes a searching one in the experience of every God-sent minister: Have I really and truly been put in trust by God with the mysteries of His love? If He has committed to my trust so honourable a charge, I shall be privileged to dispense that which He has made spiritually and experimentally mine, but not mine for my fleshly gratification, pleasure, or profit. That which He commits to me is for the comfort, consolation, and joy of those to whom He sends me. This is the point. I stand up to preach God's election, but what know I of God's election personally, feelingly, and experimentally? I preach particular and personal redemption, but what know I of my redemption by precious blood from condemnation, death, and hell? I preach spiritual regeneration, but what know I of the regenerating grace and indwelling of the ever-blessed Spirit? I preach the sure and certain glorification of the elect and redeemed of God, but what know I of the glory of my Father's house, the blessings of His table, and the love of His heart, causing me to rejoice in the blessed assurance that by-and-bye He will take me home to Himself? Well, He knows He has brought me here and given me in some little measure to experience those blessed truths which He is pleased to minister to the wants and necessities of His poor children who may hang upon the words which fall from my lips, and by which I am

privileged to meet them in their need. But "it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. iv. 2). Who shall find him faithful? His God. He will not be found holding back, or appropriating to His own use or pleasure, part of those spiritual provisions entrusted to him by the Father to meet the spiritual wants and necessities of His family. Look here! I have oftentimes been tempted in the pulpit, when a precious view of a portion of the Word has come up before me, and has caused my heart to bubble up like a well-spring of life, to keep it back as suitable for some future time; but Satan has been baffled, grace was triumphant, the truth was dealt out, and some poor children of God have found in it their food from the Master's table. God's stewards are faithful to the babes in grace, to the hoary-headed pilgrims, and to the groaning veterans who have received many a wound from Satan, sinners, and saints, and who know what that means,—

"From sinner and from saint  
They meet with many a blow."

3. *Messengers.* A messenger is one who is sent with a certain message. JEHOVAH has His messengers of covenant love and mercy. The Chief of these is Jesus, the JEHOVAH-ANGEL (Zech. iii. 1); the Messenger of the covenant (Mal. iii. 1); and the Apostle of our profession (Heb. iii. 1). This glorious Messenger calls certain of His redeemed people into oneness with Himself in this office, to carry His message of redeeming love to whom He will. It is to call, ordain, commission, and send whom He will (Mark iii. 13, 14). To Jeremiah He said, "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" (Jer. i. 7). Of these messengers Paul says, "How shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. x. 15.) These are bearers of no indistinct, or indefinite message to the elect of God. They go forth from Him with glad tidings of great joy, with the message of full, free, and unconditional salvation to an eternally-loved people. This is welcome news to waiting, wanting, and weary souls. Now turn to 2 Cor. viii. 23, where you find God's ministers have this title, "*the messengers of the Churches.*" This expresses a blessed truth. The message of God's ministers is not confined to man-made limits. Blessed be God, there are some of His in the Establishment whose ministry is welcome to those whose dissenting prejudices will not allow them to speak of that system but with bitterness. And it is a positive fact that there are those in Non-conforming communities whom God makes His messengers of love and mercy to those who fancy it would be almost a crime to soil their shoes with the dust of a *dissenting conventicle*. But, my dear friends, God, in the riches of His grace, by the power



of His truth, smashes in pieces all denominational distinctions and sectarian barriers, and reveals, to the joy and delight of His Spirit-taught children, that He knows of no Church apart from His Christ, and of no Christ apart from His Church.

4. *Labourers.* Turn to 2 Cor. vi. 1: "We then as workers together *with Him*." Some of you may be ready to say those words "*with Him*" are in italics and ought not to be there. Well, let me ask you to turn to 1 Cor. iii. 9: "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." You may depend upon this fact, if a man is commissioned and qualified by God to stand up before a people as His messenger, that man will, and must be a labourer. He labours in prayer (Col. iv. 12); he labours in the word and doctrine of Christ (1 Tim. v. 17). Concerning them Paul said, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. v. 12, 13). They find rest from their labours only when God takes them home. By night, when every voice is hushed save that of sorrow, when the weary and aching head seeks in vain for rest and repose, then there is a labouring for precious souls. At such times there is a delving and digging beneath the surface of God's Word for precious treasure, a labouring at the throne of the heavenly grace that the preached word may be conveyed and applied to the hearts of God's children, and they brought into the glorious liberty of the Gospel and to the enjoyment of covenant relationship with their gracious Lord. Yes, they are *labourers with God*. Would you like to have to do with those who labour without God? You know you would not. I should not like to labour in this pulpit without Him.

5. *Watchmen.* The Lord has given these gracious promises to Zion: "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion" (Isaiah lii. 8). "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isaiah lxii. 6, 7). It is not simply in the pulpit, but in private, the longings, desires, and sighs of this heart are heard by Him that He may make His own little hill of Zion at the Grove a praise to His scattered ones in the earth. God's ministers are watchmen on the look out for the appearance of evil to guard their people against it. They watch the approach of error to guide their loved ones from it. Mark well Paul's testimony in Heb. xiii. 17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: *for they watch for your souls.*" These faithful and honest men are watching—for your money? Not a bit of it. Though, mark you,

they cannot live without it. When a man has a wife and seven lumps of dust to provide for, and in a position like that to which God has lifted the minister of Grove chapel, it takes more than a little to keep things straight. I do not say this with a desire to operate upon your liberality, while I do hope that for the truth's sake there may be expressions of love and attachment to him who labours in weakness, fear, and much trembling for you. O what a precious declaration, "*they watch for your souls.*" *They watch* to see your souls glistening in the tears of God's own giving. *They watch* to see God's joy beaming in your faces. As His oil makes the face to shine, the ministers of God receive a good reward. *They watch* not so much for the perishing bodies to fill the pews, but for souls loved by JEHOVAH, redeemed by blood, quickened by His Spirit, preserved by His power, and which shall be presented by Him perfect and complete before His throne in glory.

6. *Guides.* Paul says, "Remember them which *are the guides*" (Heb. xiii. 7, margin). A minister placed over a people ought to be a leader, for the moment he loses that position and comes cringing behind the deacons, or, if he bows to the voice of the Church in anything which goes against his judgment, it is time for him to quit. God's minister must, and will by God's help, be a leader. He loves to lead the flock in the footsteps of the great and glorious Leader, Christ. He labours to lead His charge to the living fountain of eternal truth, to the green pastures of eternal love, and to the still waters of everlasting consolation. He longs to lead God's pilgrims through the varied intricacies of a Spirit-wrought experience, and into paths which may be painful to the flesh, but profitable to the spirit. It is his delight to lead them, I was about to say, to the foot of the cross; but I hate that Popish expression, therefore I will say, to the feet of Jesus, who hung upon the cursed cross for His people. I love to lead and guide my friends in Him on to resurrection ground where the affrighted, timid, mourning, weeping, and unbelieving disciples meet with Him, and where He graciously reveals Himself to them. It is a blessed privilege to be a leader of the weak, the weary, and the wanting, and sometimes to take them in the arms of precious faith right up to the throne and heart of God. Sometimes a poor lamb of Christ's flock faints and falls. Question it as to its faith. It has none. Where is its hope? Shrouded in darkness. Where is its love? It is weak and cold. In such expressions as these the God-sent minister detects the faith of God's giving, the hope of His own implanting, and the love of His own inspiring, and is enabled in his prayers to carry the fallen one to the heights of covenant favour where sweet fellowship is experienced with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John i. 3).

7. *THE GLORY OF CHRIST*" (2 Cor. viii. 23). Is that my title? Ah, my dear friends, as memory retraces certain parts of

my pathway, my conscience is smitten, my heart is sad, and my spirit questions, Am I the glory of Christ? A poor dunghill worm honoured with so glorious a title! What! a poor hell-deserving sinner, oftentimes carried hither and thither with discontent, repining, and rebellion, the glory of Christ? I, an unbelieving one, who almost questions the possibility of Christ coming with me into this pulpit to reveal Himself in the glorious ministry of the Word, and yet, the glory of Christ? Weak, infirm, ignorant, needy, yet dignified with the illustrious title, "THE GLORY OF CHRIST." How is this? It is in the fact that my testimony by the teaching of the Holy Ghost is, Christ first, Christ last, and Christ the All in all of His people's salvation; that the glory of His redemption work shall never be sullied; that the glory of His mediatorial crown shall never be tarnished; that the glory of His sacred person shall never be diminished. The glory of Christ and His salvation is the burden, spirit, and all in all of the testimony of this place. Do you not sometimes find it so? Yes, blessed be God, some of you can testify that it has often been so to your souls within these walls. In this highly-favoured spot of JEHOVAH'S own consecrating, He has made the place of His feet glorious in the eyes of some who are now present. Only last Wednesday but one, in the little chapel of Silverend, Olney, Bucks, the glory of JEHOVAH'S grace was such to some of us that our hearts bounded with spiritual joy. The effect upon one was so precious as to cause him to exclaim, "Is the Lord about to take my friend, His servant, home?" And a few of us can abundantly testify that on Thursday evening last at dear old Dulwich, the glory of God's grace went forth from a fluttering heart and from a stammering tongue, yet was carried by the power of sovereign, reigning grace to the hearts of His waiting children. It was a sweet season of refreshing from His presence, a blessed foretaste of that glory which shall be revealed in all its fulness to all the members of His one glorious Church.

The time is past. Having noticed the titles of Zion's gate-keepers, we will ask the Lord to come up with us in the evening and explain to us the nature and position of Zion's gates.

May He add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## ZION'S GATES.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,  
JULY 13TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in."—Isa. xxvi. 2.

OUR lot this evening will be to continue the subject set before us this morning, when I endeavoured to point out the characters of ZION'S GATEKEEPERS. These are singled out and distinguished by God amongst His people. I did not say *above* His people, for I love to know, feel, and acknowledge the perfect oneness and identity of all the members of the one body with their great and glorious Head. I do not desire to see one before or after another. I love to know and enjoy that which is blessedly set before us throughout the whole of this song, and which is the spirit of the Gospel: all the elect loved with the same love, bought with the same price, clothed with the same righteousness, animated with the same Spirit, heirs of the same glory, and all possessing the same mind. This mind is enjoined upon all the people of God in that covenant command of the Holy Ghost, which He makes life and power in their hearts' experience: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 5—8). His mind was such that He would not assert His own right, but subjected Himself to authorities and powers of His own creating, and to contempt and reproach. It is no mean mercy when a poor vile sinner is brought to possess, and to be ruled by such a spirit as this. Ministers of the Gospel are not distinguished by God *above* their

fellows, they are not lords over God's heritage ; but are distinguished among the flock as messengers, leaders, and guides. They are to go before the people in the unfoldings of the written Word, and in the possession of an experience wrought in them by the power, grace, and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit. If I am one of these, it is mine, not with pride or fleshly conceit, to go before that people which God has given me in the bowels of Jesus Christ, but in true humility, in union with our living and loving Head, seek to trace out the various spots of vital experience into which He leads them. It is mine to exalt my Lord and Saviour in the preaching of the Word that He may be exalted in the affections of His people. It is mine to honour His blessed Spirit, that His grace and power may be felt in the hearts of His quickened ones. I love to notice the signs, tokens, and evidences of spiritual life as they appear in the flock, yet I am not satisfied until I can see something better. What can be better, you ask, than signs, tokens, and evidences ? The witness of the Spirit with my spirit that I am a true-born child of God. That is better than everything else that we can possess or produce.

This morning I endeavoured to set before you the blessed truth that Zion's gatekeepers are distinguished by a variety of titles. They are *ministers* waiting upon, and serving the poor of the flock. They are *labourers* in God's vineyard to sow, plant, prune, weed, and water. They are *watchmen* to warn against the approach of error, and to guard the living in Jerusalem against evil and enemies. They are *messengers* to carry the glad tidings of covenant love and mercy to the opened ears of JEHOVAH'S scattered tribes. They are *leaders* to go before the people in the word and doctrine of Christ, and in the rich and varied experience wrought in the Church by the Holy Ghost. They go before them to the depths of heart sorrow and soul trouble, and to the heights of Divine joy and spiritual consolation. They struggle with Satan in the dust of sin and corruption, and they triumph over him in the ranges of covenant favour. Mark you, I believe that the preaching which has all to do with the dust and the devil will only leave people dusty and devilish ; while the testimony which flows from an exercised heart acquainted with its changes and the unchangeableness of the Saviour is that which the Holy Ghost will honour in lifting beggars from the dunghill and setting them upon the throne of glory. It is by this that the truly taught children of God, "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iv. 18). Those whom God calls and commissions are also styled, "THE GLORY OF CHRIST." This is the most illustrious title given by the Holy Ghost to the ministers of the Gospel. Christ is the brightness of His Father's glory, and blessed be God, every minister commissioned by Him, every

messenger sent forth by Him, and every preacher anointed by His Spirit to open up the mysteries of redeeming love, is the brightness of His glory. Let me now ask you, What would all my preaching be were it not for the exaltation, exhibition, and revelation of a precious Christ therein? Nothing but vain talking to wear out the patience of God's tried and tempted children. It is the blessed privilege of God's appointed ministers to lead the redeemed of the Lord through Zion's gates to enjoy the rights and immunities of their citizenship. According to the order set down this morning we will consider—

II.—THE GATES—"Open ye the gates." What are these gates? They are the entrances into a state of grace and acceptance with a covenant God in Christ. They are the Divine and spiritual openings into the city of Zion. It is not ours now to consider the glories of that city set before us in the Book of Revelation xxi. and xxii., where we have but a faint description in metaphorical language of the glories of that home which JEHOVAH the Father has prepared for His people, which JEHOVAH-JESUS possesses for them, and of which JEHOVAH the Spirit gives them the earnest in their hearts. There the gates are open continually. No shutting, bolting, or barring at the close of day, for there is no night there. Near to that blessed region neither Satan, sin, nor suffering can approach. We have to do with a city the appearance of which reminds us that Christ's Church here upon earth is in a militant state. Enemies and dangers surround the Church on every hand, and yet, mark you, there are no real dangers to those who are fenced about with every attribute of Deity. We see according to the description of the city in the first verse that the walls are not simply foursquare to surround it, but concentric, wall within wall, for protection and defence. This necessitates gate within gate, through which those who seek repose and security must pass. Gate after gate must be opened and passed through by the living children of God, according to that gracious command of the Leader and Commander of the redeemed hosts to His commissioned officers, "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people" (Isa. lxii. 10). This is the command of the great Head of the Church to His ministers, who must first go through the various gates of God's providing before they can describe and open them to the elect and redeemed people of God. The first we shall notice is

*The gate of regeneration.* Turn with me to Matt. vii. 13, 14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." There are not many, comparatively speaking,

even amongst those who profess and call themselves Christians, to whom the strait gate of regeneration has been opened spiritually and experimentally. You may rest assured that not all in a professedly free-grace congregation, not all who can talk very fluently concerning the doctrines of grace and of the grace of the doctrines, have entered through this very narrow gate. Many of those who have gone through cannot truly understand the straitness of the gate and the narrowness of the way, because of their fleshly propensities and weaknesses. With them "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41). Ofttimes the flesh will prove itself the stronger of the two. Many of the living family are not contented with what a covenant God will have them to be. He will prove to them in the experience of their heart, that while it is theirs to pass through the gate and proceed along the way, they walk not, but are carried. In that way they journey, yet not one step of the journey is theirs, but His, who has so graciously promised to lead them continually, to guide them in the way they shall go, to bear them upon His powerful shoulders in the midst of all their infirmities, and to carry them in His bosom when weak, weary, and worn. Through this gate and in this way there is no room whatever for the creature, and no standing for old Adam, no, not for a moment on this consecrated ground. Of this ground JEHOVAH said to Moses, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. iii. 5). This was the highly-favoured ground of Divine revelation, spiritual promise, and covenant relationship. Here there is no room at all for old nature to stand or walk. This ground belongs exclusively to a precious Christ. It is the property of the great and glorious Head over all things to His Church. If I stand upon that ground, it is in Him. If I possess it, I possess it in Him. If I am blessed with an entrance into the holy, spiritual, and heavenly city of Zion, it is wholly in Him, by Him, through Him, and with Him. Do I speak of the life I enjoy in union with Him? I say with Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). Have I faith? It is the faith of Jesus Christ (Gal. ii. 16). Have I hope? It is Christ in me the hope of glory (Col. i. 27). Do I sing? Yes, blessed be God, I do sometimes, and often when I try in the assembly of God's saints to sing His praises, He sends the waster to destroy all my fleshly efforts, and gives me to know that of myself I cannot sing; but when I am blessed with a rejoicing spirit, it is no more I that sing, but Christ that sings in me (Heb. ii. 12). Do I pray? Yes, I do. More frequently when my lips are closed, my tongue fails for thirst, my spirit faints with spiritual desire, and I can only stammer out a few incoherent utterances. Then it is mine to listen to the beatings of my spiritual heart, the breathings of His Spirit, and to know the meaning of those precious lines, the sweetness of which I cannot express:—

“ And if in lonely places  
A fearful child I shrink,  
He prays the prayers within me,  
I cannot ask or think—  
The deep unspoken language  
Known only to that love,  
Which fathoms the heart's mystery  
From the throne of light above.”

Do I preach? Sometimes I feel that I can; but God is sure to stain my pride, and prove to me that I can no more preach than I can create a world. All acceptable preaching to the hearts of God's children is by Him whose lips are filled with grace. This preaching is beautifully expressed in 1 Peter i. 12: “Them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” Inside *the gate of regeneration*, Christ is All and in all.

I think I have told you before of the dream of a colonel in the army whom God brought into the rich enjoyment of His lovingkindness and tender mercy in Jesus Christ. In his dream he saw the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem. He sought an entrance to enjoy its privileges and immunities, but this was denied him. Something induced him to strip himself of his clothes. He took off his coat, but no admission. Each article of clothing was cast off, and still the gate was closed against him. He remembered that next his skin he wore a silk vest of very fine texture. This was off in an instant, when the gate flew open and he entered, a naked sinner into the presence of his God. You may depend upon it, whatever religion, morality, education, or accomplishment may have done for us, while we cling to a single rag, shred, or thread of the same, we shall experience no true, spiritual entrance into the kingdom of our God and His Christ. While the sinner is anything in himself, religiously or morally, he can know nothing of fellowship with God in Jesus Christ, or of the true communion of saints. He may be a member of a Church, and stupidly imagine the Church cannot prosper without him; but he will ever be a burden, and a source of anxiety and grief to the spiritually-taught whose All is in the Lord, and not in self. He who is puffed up with spiritual pride because of the depth of his experience, or the height of his knowledge, may find to his sorrow that the depth of his experience reaches to the depths of hell, while the height of his knowledge rises no higher than the highest hair of his head. My dear friends, the stripping room is hard by *the gate of regeneration*, and in it the child of God will be taught that he must enter into life halt, and maimed, and blind (Mark ix. 43—47); that he may walk with Christ's legs, proceed in Christ's arms, and be guided by Christ's eyes. Thus the elect and redeemed of God enter into life, spiritual and eternal, which they shall have more abundantly (John x. 10).

Here we are shut up to the glorious truth that in all salva-



tion matters, and in every spiritual revelation, Christ is All and in all. This is set before us in that precious parable of the sheepfold, the Shepherd, and the sheep, in John x. 1, where the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the entering in thus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Without the communication of spiritual life, without the conviction of sin by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, without that stripping process in which all creature-righteousness, strength, and confidence is taken away, and if he who enters in is not convinced that his entrance is in the person of Jesus, by the intercession of Jesus, with the works of Jesus, and through the blood and righteousness of Jesus, "the same is a thief and a robber." He steals the glory of salvation from Christ, and robs the Holy Ghost of all honour in his work of regeneration. How many thieves and robbers have we in this congregation to-night? If I were to attempt counting them, it would only prove my folly. No minister of the Gospel can with unerring certainty distinguish between the saints and sinners in his congregation, and I believe any minister who attempts that game is more under the influence of Satan, and puffed up with his fleshly mind, than under the guidance of God the Holy Ghost. I know full well that every God-sent minister who preaches the living Word will be a divider between flesh and Spirit, nature and grace in the child of God, and between the elect and reprobate among his hearers. God alone knows how it is done whilst the minister is totally ignorant of the stir his testimony is producing. You remember the testimony of JEHOVAH to Jeremiah: "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth" (Jer. xv. 19). Mark! It is not taking the vile from the precious. I have heard preachers who have paid more attention to the vile than to the precious, who hurled stones of truth at the heads of some of their hearers, but whose testimony touched not my heart. This reminds me of a saying of my now glorified friend O'Leary, which is this, "*Thrashing Arminians is not feeding the flock; but, if the flock is fed, Arminians will be sure to be thrashed.*" Let the flock be fed with pure provision, and the swinish herd that feeds upon offal will be sure to wince and fly off. It is my delight to do the bidding of our most glorious Christ and preach His pure Gospel to the elect of God. "Oh!" cries Mr. Duty-faith, "you do not preach the Gospel to sinners!" Get away with you, old gentleman, I do not preach to anyone else, for I know of none but sinners to preach to.

"This faithful saying let us own  
 (Well worthy 'tis to be believ'd),  
 That Christ into the world came down,  
 That sinners might by Him be sav'd:

Sinners are high in His esteem,  
And sinners highly value Him."

Some of us know the truth and preciousness of these lines of spiritual import :

"What comfort can a Saviour bring  
To those who never felt their woe?  
A sinner is a sacred thing,  
The Holy Ghost has made him so:  
New life from Him we must receive  
Before for sin we rightly grieve."

Let me ask again, How many thieves and robbers are there here this evening? If any of you have climbed over the wall, or crept under the gate, for religious old Adam is so mighty clever that, if he has not an opportunity to climb over the wall, he will humble himself to creep under the gate, so as to be able to exhibit himself in the assemblies of the saints. Read John x. 9: "I am the Door: by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." Mark that, "*by Me*," not by any fleshly effort or creature aid. Do you know anything of that *in and out* experience? This is that which a few of us were privileged to listen to the other night from those remarkable words: "And God went up from him in the place where He talked with him" (Gen. xxxv. 13). In the very place where God reveals His gracious presence and communicates His lovingkindness and tender mercy, He will go up, hide His face, and cause His deserted and desolate children to seek after Him. There is a spiritual going in and out known only to the living in Jerusalem; and it is always by the door or gate, Christ Jesus. You will have some spiritual understanding of this if the Holy Ghost is pleased to throw the light of God upon those three precious Psalms, the 22nd revealing the *good* Shepherd in Redemption, the 23rd the *great* Shepherd in Resurrection, and the 24th the *chief* Shepherd in Glory and Regeneration. Yes, the 24th speaks of spiritual regeneration. Look at the 6th and following verses: "This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O God of Jacob. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." This is an allusion to military customs. A triumphant conqueror approaches the gates of a city subdued to himself, when the demand goes forth for the gates with the portcullis to be opened and lifted up. Many would confine this to the entrance of our blessed Lord into glory yonder. Blessed be God, glory up yonder cannot exist without its being revealed to God's redeemed down here. Christ has entered into His glory in the presence of God the Father, and He enters into it with great delight as He sees the fruit of the travail of His soul returning unto Him in spiritual regeneration. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," is a Divine command accompanied by Divine power, and Jesus enters into

the heart of His redeemed, and His redeemed enter into His, and they in blessed oneness enter into possession of the glory which the Father reserved for them from the days of eternity. In reply to the command, the question is asked, "Who is this King of glory?" The answer is immediately given, "The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle." The command is repeated, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." The question again goes forth, "Who is this King of glory?" when the answer comes pealing down in tones of omnipotent grace, "The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory." Yes, He the LORD of all the hosts of angels who do His pleasure, of all the hosts of His redeemed scattered abroad throughout this naughty world, of all the hosts of infernal spirits, who, with all their malignity against the Church of God, can only work His pleasure in the polishing and perfecting of the saints, all the hosts of influences which surround us, all the hosts of raindrops which have soaked our earth of late, causing men's hearts to quake for fear through not realising that every drop has to do with the accomplishment of the will of

"The great First Cause of all events,  
Who gives decrees, and ne'er repents,  
And Holy is His name."

As He passes through *the gate of regeneration* by His resurrection power, He takes possession of the hearts of His people, the citadel of Mansoul, so beautifully described in Bunyan's "Holy War." As this is accomplished in our heart's experience, we see His hand in every circumstance surrounding us, and shall acknowledge the working of His will in the midst of all the confusion, depression, distress, and sorrow we meet with on every hand. There is no real quietness for any but those who have passed through the gate, and entered into His courts with praise, to express their thankfulness, and speak well of His name. We will now hasten to notice,

*The gate of hope.* Turn with me to Hosea ii. 14, 15: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness." We do not always like that. God calls it in Ezekiel xx. 35: "The wilderness of the people." This is not a pleasant, but it is a very profitable place for the children of God. "And speak comfortably unto her," or, "*friendly*," or, "*to her heart*." Heart-work and heart-communications alone will satisfy the new-born and the true-born child of God, who has entered into communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost through *the gate of regeneration*. "And I will give her her vineyards from thence." From whence? From that very spot of her wilderness experience. Just think of that the next time you are brought to experience the wilderness of this world, the wilderness of your heart, and the wild wilderness of the people among whom you

dwell—a wilderness intricate, puzzling, and perplexing, “I will give her her vineyards from thence.” “And the valley of Achor,” a place of trouble, confusion, disorder, distress, and death. “And the valley of Achor for a *door of hope*.” O what a glorious truth! In the midst of all our doubts, fears, and anxieties, hope springs up in the heart, and the door opens through which the child of God must pass into the enjoyment of faith in the person and promises of JEHOVAH-JESUS, Son of God most high. It is oftentimes the case, that before faith is experienced, hope is experimentally possessed. There are many of God’s children who possess the faith of His operation, who, if asked as to the reality of it, would ignore its existence altogether. By the light of God the child sees, feels, and is fully acquainted with the unbelief of his nature, yet will not give up his little hope. This is the “good hope through grace” given by God to Paul and his Thessalonian brethren (2 Thess. ii. 16). It was this caused the hymn writer to sing so sweetly,—

“Good hope through grace the saints possess,  
The fruit of Jesus’ righteousness,  
And by His Spirit given;  
Faith eyes the promise firm and sure,  
And hope expects for evermore  
To dwell with Christ in heaven.”

What is hope? It is belief not amounting to certainty. Look at that precious description given of it in Heb. vi. 18, 19, where, in describing the persons who are blessed with the possession of it as *refugees of hope*, the apostle says, “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” The heirs of promise and refugees of hope flee to the true city of refuge which is Christ Himself, in whom no condemnation, no death, no danger, can ever be found. To fugitives from law, sin, death, and hell, this *gate of hope* is opened by Zion’s gate-keepers in their faithful declarations of God’s glorious Gospel. Hope may appear to be a very feeble grace, yet it is a very blessed one, for it pleases the Lord to have gracious respect to those that hope in His mercy, though they will not presume to boast of any volition of their mind in the matter (Psa. xxxiii. 18). Turn with me to Col. i. 27: “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the Hope of glory.” See! Christ my Life! Christ my Hope! Christ my All! As I enter into the enjoyment of this Hope, my heart goes out to God for the little ones in His family in the

words of Nehemiah i. 11: "O LORD, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants who desire to fear Thy name." "Begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter i. 3), "by Christ we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 2). By Christ's own testimony from the lips of His sent ministers who have gone before us through the gates of regeneration and hope, we are brought to a spiritual understanding of our being citizens of no mean city, and of our progress to the palace of our King. We are now led to

*The gate of faith.* Where do we find this? Turn to Acts xiv. 27: "And when they were come, and had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." This door, or gate of faith was opened by God through the testimony of the apostles. So it is now. Zion's gatekeepers testify of Christ in His fulness and sufficiency of grace by which the gates are opened for the entrance of the redeemed into the enjoyment of their citizenship. As we read of the door of faith, we are led to contemplate faith's door, which is Christ, according to that precious declaration referred to in John x. 9: "I am the Door." If I enter into the city, it is by precious faith; yet the faith is not of my own producing, but that of the operation of God (Col. ii. 12). Without faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb. xi. 6). Without holiness I cannot see Him (Heb. xii. 14); without blood there is no redemption; without righteousness there is no justification; and without wisdom there is no understanding in the way. But Christ is the Object, Author, and Finisher of my faith, Christ is my Hope, Christ is my Sanctification, Christ is my Righteousness, Christ is my Redemption, Christ is my Glory, and Christ is my All in All. In 1 Cor. xvi. 9, Paul says, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Has God's faith been wrought in you by the power of the Holy Ghost, so that your hand clings to a precious Christ, your feet run to a precious Christ, your eyes look to a precious Christ, your heart longs for a precious Christ, your spirit hungers and thirsts for a precious Christ? Then, as assuredly as Christ entered into the holiest of all for you, so your faith and hope have entered too, and are centered in Him there. As you have entered feelingly and experimentally into the enjoyment of the privileges and immunities of the kingdom of God, and rejoice even a little in the spiritual apprehension of them here below, so you will enter into His glory up yonder when all the temptations and trials of the journey are past and gone for ever.

Faith. What is it? It is the reliance of the heart upon God's testimony. It is believing that which we do not see. I have a pair of spectacles in my hand, but I do not believe they

are there. I know it by the evidence of my natural senses. Tell me of something I never saw, and I either believe or disbelieve you. Tell me of something apart altogether from my knowledge, and as this is brought home with convincing proof of its truthfulness, I receive it and rely upon it as truth. I thus understand spiritually the apostle's declaration in Heb. xi. 1: "Now faith is the substance," *ground*, or *confidence*, "of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is the spiritual enjoyment of the person, preciousness, and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do I believe in His righteousness? It is by His faith (Phil. iii. 9). Do I believe that I possess His life? It is by His faith (Gal. ii. 20). Do I believe that I am justified before God? It is by the faith of Jesus Christ (Gal. ii. 16). Now turn to that precious portion recorded in Acts xiii. 38, 39: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Do you say my justification is by my believing? I say it is not. It is "BY HIM all that believe are justified from all things." Through whatever minister you have received this precious truth, the same is *Zion's gate-opener* to you.

*The gate of righteousness.* Now turn with me to that resurrection and regeneration Psalm, the 108th, where the Lord Jesus Christ says, "The LORD hath chastened Me sore: but He hath not given Me over unto death. *Open to Me the gates of righteousness*, I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD. This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter." It is the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ who calls, "Open to Me the gates of righteousness." What are these gates? The gate of regeneration, the gate of hope, and the gate of faith through which the Head of the Church passes with His members. Through them He must pass with all those whom the Father gave to Him, whom He redeemed with His most precious blood, who are the fruit of His soul travail, the joy of His heart, and the delight of His eye. Oh, my dear friends, God does nothing in unrighteousness. He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works (Psa. cxlv. 17). He was righteous before the worlds were framed, when, in the decree of election, part of the human family was predestined to eternal glory, and the other part left to wander to eternal perdition. He was righteous when, on Calvary's cross, His precious blood redeemed His own elect, and left the rest to perish in their sins. He was righteous when, from Bethlehem to Calvary, He gave a perfect obedience to His Father's righteous law for all His elect and redeemed ones in which they shall stand everlastingly complete before His face. On righteous ground He takes possession of His own, and in His adorable person brings them through the gates into the city. It is no mean city where they find their names

enrolled, and its glorious freedom is conferred upon them. This is the glorious liberty of the children of God. Here are found no legal shackles, no fleshly fetters, no carnal cords to bind the free-born citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. Within these gates the whip of small cords prepared by the legal driver is scorned by those who are let loose to range the heights of covenant favour in blessed association with their Redeemer and their God.

III.—THE GRACIOUS PRIVILEGES—"That the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." This is the reason given for the command, "Open ye the gates." It is mine then, and the blessed privilege of every God-sent minister to open these gates testimonially by the declaration of His truth, the proclamation of His promises, the opening up of the mysteries of grace, and by tracing the experience in which a child of God enters into the strong city by spiritual regeneration, a good hope through grace, and the faith of God's operation. Entering in this way, the subject of Divine grace knows and feels that he forms a part of the righteous nation mentioned in the text. What nation is this? Some point to the Jews, but that will not do for me. Turn to *Psa. xxxiii. 12*: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance." The Holy Ghost describes this in *1 Peter ii. 10*: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation." A nation holy in its great and glorious King. A nation righteous in its righteous Head. "*Which keepeth the truth.*" All the truth designed for each citizen must, and will be, kept by Him. Some poor children will say, We are not so clever as to be able to do that. Wait! Is the deserter clever who keeps the brand burned into his flesh? The citizen of Zion who receives the truth of the Father's electing love, the Son's redeeming grace, and the Spirit's regenerating mercy, receives it in the furnace of affliction, where it is so burnt in, that neither sin, Satan, nor suffering can ever obliterate it. The living child of God may oftentimes lose the remembrance of it, but the covenant Remembrancer will bring it to light in His own good time. All the elect and redeemed of God shall enter into this no mean city by the means which God has in His own hands, and shall know feelingly what that means as expressed in those lines of dear old Joseph Irons:

" We have listened to the preacher,  
Truth by him has now been shown ;  
But we want a greater Teacher  
From the everlasting throne.  
Application  
Is the work of God alone.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## EXPERIMENTAL INUNDATION.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
MARCH 30TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him."—Isaiah lix. 19.

IN this chapter we have the total depravity, utter incorrigibility, and universal corruption of human nature strikingly set forth. As my eye scanned the chapter this morning before coming here, much questioning arose in my mind as to whether or no I should read it. The greater portion displays the awful malady, sin, with only here and there a word about God's remedy. Here we can see sin abounding, and the chariot wheels of salvation apparently dragging heavily. The opening words are an expostulation of JEHOVAH to His ancient people. He says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." These words were addressed to a people who were at a fearful distance from God, yet professedly nigh. Outward privileges secure not nearness or communion with God. In the midst of the corrupt mass of the Jewish people a remnant was found who mourned over their felt distance from the God they loved, and oftentimes they could call into question the reality of their love. Look at the second verse: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." Sin, through the convicting power of the Holy Ghost, and felt in the conscience of a living child of God, forms a dense, black cloud, hiding a loving Father's face from view. In this night of desertion the sweet recognition of a covenant Parent is withheld, when the child turns inward and after great searchings of heart comes to the just conclusion so aptly described in the following verses. Terrible, trenchant, and unmistakable is the declaration of JEHOVAH concerning



every part and particle of fallen human nature. I do not mean the human nature of the reprobate alone, but that of the elect also. The child of God sometimes starts with convulsive horror at the faithful portrait of himself as drawn by the eternal Spirit. How do I know this? Because I have winced in this pulpit under the power of God's Word as it has been squeezed out of this heart of mine and drawn by the Spirit of the living God from the depths of a Divinely wrought experience. My poor, proud nature loves not to confess this; but would be something in itself different altogether, and appear righteous, holy, and devout in the eyes of those whom I address. But God has graciously thrown His pure unsullied light upon me, and in myself—that is, in my flesh—I can see no good thing. Look at that beautiful description given by Paul of the light of God's glory shining upon him in Acts xxii. 11. He says, "I could not see for the glory of that light." He then ceased to see any beauty or merit in his own righteousness. He was then conscious that his best works were but as splendid sins in the presence of Infinite Excellency. His former virtues then appeared as so many vices deserving ten-thousand times over the lowest place in hell. He could not see a particle of merit in all his religious parade and performances, or any hope of acceptance with God through his prayers, praises, or *piety*. He could see nothing but the deceit, depravity, and distance from God as described in the first eight verses of this fifty-ninth chapter of Isaiah. In the experience of the same, the godly remnant of Isaiah's day confessed, "Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for lightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us." Now listen! "For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them." In the glory of that light every man knoweth the plague of his own heart. But look! "In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter: yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." Mark that! A prey for Satan, a prey for the world, a prey for false brethren, a prey for the proud professor, a prey to his evil surmisings, a prey to his doubts and fears. Notice the marginal reading: "He that departeth from evil *is accounted mad*." If departing from evil which appears in the shape of error, or, in the persons of

trimmers of God's truth, trucklers with Satan's free-will lies, and temporisers for the sake of place, position, and power, be accounted madness, let me be madder still. If the spiritual and eternal life which God has given me be "for a prey in all places whither" I go, as I am blessed with the guidance of His Spirit, I bow in acquiescence with His will, and my heart would unceasingly respond, Amen. "And the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him, that there was no judgment. And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him: and His righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompence to His enemies; to the islands He will repay recompence." Here are striking figures from military life employed to show forth the perfect and complete salvation accomplished for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, and the entire overthrow of all our spiritual enemies. "So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the West, and His glory from the rising of the sun." What does this mean? That from all parts of the habitable globe, from both hemispheres, the elect sons and daughters of JEHOVAH shall be brought to experience the blessings of His salvation, to enjoy the bounties of His house, to feed upon the provisions of His table, and to delight in the affections of His heart. Then we come to the words of our text, and very precious words they are. Look at them!

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him," or, according to the margin, "*put him to flight.*"

Divine certainties appear in every part of this very precious portion of inspired truth. Ay, and Divine certainties appear in those very spots where our sensitive spirits quail. The inspired writer says, "*When the enemy shall come in.*" It is not, "*When the enemy may come in.*" What say our nice, cozy, comfortable, drawing-room professors to this? There are thousands who are trifling with eternal realities and playing at religious sham-fights who never smelt hell's powder, nor trembled before the roar of heaven's artillery. Yes, there are thousands who have not experienced the lodgment in their trembling souls of venomous shafts from Satan's quiver, and who know nothing of his fiery darts of temptation, which work sad havoc in the spiritual experience of the tried and tempted children of God. Art thou a child of God by spiritual regeneration? The enemy *shall come in* to question thy sonship. Art thou a partaker of the Father's grace? The enemy *shall come in* and suggest the falsity of it. Art thou in possession of God's salvation? The enemy *shall come in* causing doubt and unbelief as to thy interest therein.

Art thou blessed with the comforts and consolations which abound by Jesus Christ? The enemy *shall come in* and turn them into grief and mourning. But there is another Divine certainty in the text which is a marvellous mercy of a covenant God, "the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." For every misery the child of God experiences, the Father has a mercy in store. There is not a sorrow that a pilgrim of Zion shall bear, but Zion's King has a joy treasured up for him. There is not a day of adversity dawns upon the living in Jerusalem, but what is followed by a day of prosperity. There cannot be a night of gloom to God's Israel not succeeded by a morning of joy. Does the Christian traveller sigh because of his felt distance from his Father's house? He shall be led to His presence, which is salvation, and where there is fulness of joy for evermore.

But it is ours for a little while, in humble dependence upon the Spirit's gracious guidance, to contemplate this interesting and instructive portion of the written Word, and in so doing, notice it in the four following aspects:—

I.—THE ENEMY—"When the enemy shall come in like a flood."

II.—THE GODHEAD OF THE HOLY GHOST—"The Spirit of the Lord."

III.—HIS GRACIOUS WORK—"Shall lift up a standard against him."

IV.—THE GLORIOUS RESULT—"Shall put him to flight" (Margin).

I.—THE ENEMY—"When the enemy shall come in." Who is he? We are not left long in doubt concerning the identity of this person. Turn with me to Matthew xiii. 24—28: "Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." The term "*kingdom of heaven*" is a characteristic of the Gospel by Matthew, as the word "*heaven*" is of the Book of Revelation. "And there appeared another wonder *in heaven*; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns." Now we cannot for a moment suppose that the devil can enter into the special residence of Deity. The terms "*kingdom of heaven*" and "*heaven*," refer to events transpiring in this dispensation of grace amongst the heavenly people who are mixed up, and surrounded with earthly associations. Is good seed sown? The enemy is sure to come and sow his tares. "So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, *An enemy hath done this.*" Now when the disciples were alone with their Lord, they asked Him to explain the parable. "He answered and said unto them, He that

soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; *the enemy that sowed them is the devil.*" Here we are not left in doubt as to who is the great enemy of God, His Christ, and His people. This is revealed throughout the whole of God's blessed Book. I would here direct your attention to a peculiarity in the writings of John: when the threefold enemy of the Church of God, the world, the flesh, and the devil, is described, it is thus:—

1. *The world against the Father.* See 1 John ii. 15, 16: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

2. *The devil against the Son.* See 1 John iii. 8: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

3. *The flesh against the Spirit.* See John iii. 6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." With this agree the words of Paul in Gal. v. 17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Thus we see that the world is dead against the Father in His election. The devil is dead against the Son in His redemption. The flesh is dead against the Holy Ghost in His regeneration. These are Divine declarations, and as assuredly as we are brought into experimental oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall know something of the fearful opposings of this threefold enemy to the life of God which He will maintain in us. The opposition will be in respect to the blessings which God makes experimentally ours. Is heaven my home? Do I know aught of that blessed truth spoken by Paul in Phil. iii. 20: "Our citizenship is in heaven?" Can I sing feelingly and in faith for a moment or two:

"I have a home above,  
From sin and sorrow free;  
A mansion which eternal love  
Designed and formed for me?"

Do we experience a little going forth to that glorious time, when, divested of the burden of the flesh, and free from sin, sorrow, and suffering, we shall bask in light and sunshine in the presence of Him who loves us with an everlasting love? As sure as we do, the devil will tempt us with the world's baubles and blandishments. We need not seek the haunt of the hermit, or the seclusion of the deluded monk or nun; for, mark, according to the declaration of the eternal truth in Eccles. iii. 2: "He has set the world in their heart," and as Satan works upon that, the child of the living God will oftentimes know more of the

world in solitude, than when he is mingling with the busy throng. Does God, in the riches of His grace and by the power of the Holy Ghost, exalt His Christ in the affections of an elect vessel of mercy? Satan will by his accursed accusations dispute the right of God's Christ to that throne which he usurped so long during the dark days of unregeneracy. Does JEHOVAH the Father favour us in the Son of His love with gracious realisations of the indwelling of His Spirit? Can we sing sometimes with a little sweet assurance:

"And Thou Eternal Spirit vast,  
What love can Thine transcend?  
Since Thou Thy lot with me hath cast,  
Indwelling God and Friend?"

If so, you may depend upon it, the experience set before us in Lam. i. 16, will be ours: "The Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me." There will oftentimes be no bright shining on the way, no consolation of the spirit, no witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God. Spiritual night must be ours, as well as spiritual day—the clouds of sin and unbelief will gather thick around us, and the Sun of Righteousness will descend beneath our spiritual horizon, when the beasts of the forest will prowl forth. What beasts? Discontent, doubt, fear, pride, unbelief, come forth from their lurking places. Assailed and surrounded by these, we feel ourselves to be the makesport of Satan. This is his time also to work presumption, which engenders accursed indifference to the blessings God has graciously promised, and to the bounties with which He surrounds me.

SIN is our hateful enemy which came in like a flood at the time of the Adam-fall, spreading devastation, desolation, and death over the whole creation. See how this is described in the latter part of chap. v. of the Epistle to the Romans: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as *sin hath reigned unto death*." Here we see sin as a master, a tyrant, an oppressor, and such it is experienced by every living child of God. He who knows nothing of the overwhelming power of sin, will never know the Lord Jesus Christ as his gracious Deliverer. He who is ignorant of sin as a tyrant, can never rejoice in that liberty with which Christ sets His people free. He who never experienced the surgings and seethings of indwelling corruption can never know

"—the deep mysterious joy  
Of peace with God within."

He who was never tossed upon the billows of temptation must

be destitute of the quietness of God which passeth all understanding. Water and fire are very good servants, but awfully bad masters. Rivers and seas, in low-lying countries, are oft-times dammed up; but when they break through their bounds and overflow the land, desolation and ruin are the results. We have had a painful illustration of this within the last few weeks. We have been startled and our sympathies have been roused with the accounts of the terrible inundations in Hungary, where thousands of our fellow-creatures have been reduced to poverty, want, and beggary. He who binds the floods from overflowing can let them loose when He pleases. Godless politicians and graceless philosophers are occupied with second causes and see not God's hand in all this; but it is our gracious privilege to see God in everything, and sing with dear old Joseph Irons:

"The Great First Cause of all events,  
He gives decrees, and ne'er repents;  
And Holy is His name."

"He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan. iv. 35). Yes, water unchecked is a terrible enemy to man. So is sin unrestrained to the living child of God. The Psalmist knew this and cried, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me" (Psalm xl. 12, 13).

THE WORLD with its spirit prove awfully antagonistic to the life of God in the experience of the living in Jerusalem. See how James declares this in his 4th chapter, 4th verse: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Can any words be plainer than these? Look at the world's hatred to the people of God as described in the language of our blessed Lord and Master in John xvii. 14: "I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The whole of the Scriptures of truth declare most pointedly, and that beyond the reach of refutation, that the world with its spirit, influences, and associations is dead set against God and His Christ. If we are spiritually one with God's Christ, the world, *pious* and profane, will prove itself a terrible enemy to us. It is of God's mercy that we enjoy His gathering and protecting power within the walls of Grove chapel, and His children throughout this land have great occasion to praise and adore Him for fencing them about with the hedge of the civil law. They can meet together according to their several modes and manners, none daring to make them afraid. If the truth is

in the pulpit, it matters little what may be the form of worship or the mode of service. If the truth of God is in the pulpit, that is everything to me. Times of refreshing are experienced in God's house on Sunday; but where are you on the Monday? Think of the deadening associations of the past week, and then of "the anxious, dread to-morrow" when the stern realities of every-day life must be met, Satan's brood of every complexion must be encountered, godless competition will tax your patience and try your faith, the overreaching of one and the holding back of that which is due by another will almost take away your breath and cause your very soul to quiver with fear. This enemy will come in like a flood, ay, even while we are worshipping before the throne of our God. As assuredly as the Spirit has brought us into blessed and hallowed association and identification with Him who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, so shall we know something of the world's hatred, enmity, and opposition to God, His Christ, His truth, and His people. But mark! There is another enemy—

**DEATH.** Turn to 1 Cor. xv. 26: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The apostle knew something of the power of this terrible enemy. He said, "I die daily" (verse 31); "In deaths oft" (2 Cor. xi. 23). The thought of natural death is anything but pleasant. The experience of spiritual death is too grievous to be borne. The dread of eternal death drives the soul for refuge in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Yet these will sometimes come in like a flood in the experience of the child of God, causing him to tremble, as it were, on the very brink of eternity, ay, on the very brink of the burning lake. When the enemy persecutes my soul and smites my life down to the ground; when he hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead, and my spirit is overwhelmed within me with desolation and dread, I fear I shall perish, and a sword more terrible than that of Damocles appears to hang over me. Yet, blessed be God, the certain accomplishment of the first part of the text is sure to be followed by the certain accomplishment of the latter. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him."

Those of us who read this chapter studiously know that the word "flood" is a figure of speech taken from the ravaging, devastating, and destroying progress of a victorious army. There is an army of wicked spirits and wicked men with Satan at its head incessantly warring against the armies of the living God. I believe this has reference, in the first place, to the literal enemies of God's ancient people; and, secondarily, in the deep which coucheth beneath the letter of the Word there is a reference to the spiritual Israel of God throughout all time. You will find this metaphor if you will turn with me to Isaiah

viii. 7, 8 : " Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the King of Assyria, and all his glory : and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks : and he shall pass through Judah ; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck ; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." Ah, my dear friends, in the experience of the glory of Immanuel's land we may well sing,—

" With mercy and with judgment,  
My web of time He wove,  
And, aye, the dew's of sorrow  
Were lusted with His love.  
I'll bless the hand that guided,  
I'll bless the heart that planned,  
When throned where glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land."

When JEHOVAH'S judgments are abroad in His land, when He has no mercy on my wretched flesh, and when the enemy comes in like a flood reaching even to the neck, but, blessed be God, not over head, then, while the Head is above all floods, the body must swim. A risen, ascended, and glorified Christ is the Head of the body, and far beyond the reach of all the floods of sin, corruption, evil, depravity, and death ; so, though these may reach even to the neck of a true Zionite, and hide the beauties of the land of spiritual promise from view, the glorious truth shall hold good, " When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee " (Isaiah xliii. 2). You see the same figure used in chapter xviii. 2 : " That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto ; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled." This reminds us of the rivers of sin, debauchery, profanity, error, superstition, and infidelity which abound on every hand in professing Zion. The same figure we have in the last verse : " In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto : a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion." Now turn to Psalm xviii. 4, where we find David in experimental oneness with the whole Church of God declaring,—

" The floods of UNGODLY MEN made me afraid." You may depend upon it, the floods of ungodly men oftentimes make Thomas Bradbury afraid. I do not mean the profligate and profane who frequent the gin palaces and dens of infamy. There are more ungodly men than these in God's eyes. What think you of those who have sworn before the God of heaven that they believe, hold, and maintain the glorious doctrines of grace



as set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles of England's Church, yet whose preaching pronounces them to be nought better than a tissue of lies. If these are not ungodly men, I do not know what ungodliness is. These promise to renounce and denounce that lie of Satan, Free-will, yet every time they open their mouth they proclaim and defend it. These are deceivers indeed; but the world is swarming with such, seeking their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's, maintaining their own proud fleshly will, and ignoring the will of a sovereign covenant-keeping God. Yes, these seek their own peace at the expense of JEHOVAH'S honour, they are bent upon their own ease at the expense of JEHOVAH'S glory. But we may come a little nearer home in this matter. We find some who profess marvellous love and attachment to the Gospel of God's sovereign, free, and uninfluenced grace, to His pure and unadulterated Word, which is all of a piece, and which reveals a full and finished salvation to all the election of grace, yet will bring in something of the creature's duty, doing, or willing. These come so blandly and say, "You won't ignore the creature altogether! Do not make man into a mere machine!" Oh, my dear friends, I am not going to make man into a machine; but I do declare he is ten times worse. See! If a man makes a machine, he may be able to make it work in perfect order; but wretched man is perfectly disordered and disorganised in every part. Solomon says, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccles. vii. 29). What does that mean? If the unregenerate sinner has not a way of sinning ready made to his hand, he is sure to invent one. The proud professor whose heart has never been broken through a sense and sight of the heinousness of sin, with the self-sufficient pietist whose spirit knows nothing of the melting power of Jesus' precious name, are enemies indeed, flooding and overflowing the professing Church with their will-worship and hypocrisy. Cast your eyes around you now and let your mind rest upon certain spots where the venerable champions for God's whole truth, valiant men of Israel, stood a few years ago. What see you now? Ichabod written upon everything. Temporising, trimming, and toning down the truth to please the fleshly religious crowd is all the fashion. "So they wrap it up" may be written upon ten thousand pulpits where speculators spout only to deceive. I need not mention names, or places where once the testimony was all of a piece, and the glorious Gospel of the grace of God was proclaimed fully, fearlessly, and feelingly; but now truth is torn and mangled, and a loathsome hash of truth and error, grace and human merit, spirit and flesh, is dealt out unsparingly. But we may come a little closer home.

*"The enemy shall come in like a flood."* Oftentimes I mourn and sigh because of the floods of doubt, which overwhelm my

mind in reference to God's own work of grace in my heart, and to the reality of the blessed Spirit's presence and power in me. Has the Spirit witnessed with my spirit that I am a child of God? The enemy is sure to cast a flood of unbelieving thoughts into my mind. His accursed ifs, buts, and perhapses will cast a cloud over my spirit and cause me to call in question the life of God within me. Satan suggests, "If thou hadst the faintest claim to sonship, frowns would not darken thy face, neither would trouble, trial, or disappointment ruffle the equanimity of thy temper." The children of God, in the experience of these perplexing doubts and fears are brought to ask the question of Rebekah when the twins struggled within her: "If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD" (Gen. xxv. 22). You may depend upon it, if you are a true-born child of God there will be an almost continual conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, nature and grace, natural reason against spiritual revelation, and as the struggle increases you will often wonder when and where the scene will end.

"If sometimes I strive, as I mourn,  
My hold of the promise to keep,  
The billows more fiercely return,  
And plunge me again in the deep.  
While harass'd and cast from Thy sight,  
The tempter suggests with a roar,  
'The Lord has forsaken thee quite,  
Thy God will be gracious no more.'"

"*The enemy shall come in like a flood.*" Yes, he will come in with a flood of fears. Fears of what? Concerning my standing in grace, of my making shipwreck of my faith, lest my hope should be destroyed, my religion prove a delusion, my feet should not be kept from falling, and I be left through the craft and subtilty of the devil to bring a disgrace upon the name and cause of my precious Lord and Master. Yet here I can testify, to the glory of His great name, He has always proved better to me than all my fears. As we look around us we cannot help but mourn at the sight of the desolation wrought by the floods of error on every hand. Satan is a cunning, crafty enemy. True to his nature, he is a creeping, crawling foe. Thousands of his brood are like him in this respect. See how the apostle writes of them in Gal. ii. 4: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." Again he describes them: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts. Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. iii. 5—7). These will creep into a Church. Mark! They do not rush in, but creep and crawl like their father the devil. On their very belly they will go to obtain place, position,

and power. When they have reached the goal of their expectation, what then? They are a continual source of discontent and discord. Murmurers are they, who can sit and listen to truths most glorious, walk out of chapel and circulate tales the most grievous. As they retire from the solemn worship and service of JEHOVAH, the first topic engaging their time and their tongues is something earthly, sensual, devilish, with which they intend to draw the pastor, deacons, or someone else over the coals. May the Lord of His infinite mercy and goodness preserve us from all such creepers in.

*"The enemy shall come in like a flood."* He will come into a man's house and ravage it with his hellish influences, not merely into the domestic circle, but into the thoughts, purposes, imaginations and desires of the true-born child of God, causing the spirit to tremble with fear. With flood after flood of temptation, lust, and sin he will seemingly overwhelm and swamp the very life of God in His child, but this will only prove to be the Father's way to draw forth the cry,

"When rising floods my soul o'erflow  
When sinks my strength in waves of woe,  
Saviour, Thy timely aid impart,  
To raise my head and cheer my heart."

This leads us to consider the next point, the Person by whose power and might the enemy shall be finally overcome.

II.—"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD." But the time has gone. Next Sunday morning, God willing, we will look at the remaining portion of the text.

May the Lord graciously add His blessing for His name and mercy's sake. Amen.

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#### HYMN.

WHEN clouds around our Zion rise,  
And mortals dare our Christ despise,  
God's remnant is His special care,  
Though peel'd and scatter'd here and there.

They are th' election of His grace,  
Though but a remnant of our race,  
For ever dear to Jesu's heart,  
And with them He will never part.

The choice of His eternal love,  
Shall reign with Jesus Christ above;  
He calls and conquers them by grace,  
And they shall see His lovely face.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## THE SPIRIT AND THE STANDARD.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
APRIL 6TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"The Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a Standard against him."—Isaiah lix. 19.

IT was our lot last Sunday morning to consider the state and condition of poor human nature as declared by the prophet through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in the first eight verses of this chapter. We also noticed the experience of the same as flowing from the hearts of those who are under the direct power, grace, and guidance of the ever-blessed Spirit, and the account these persons have to give of themselves. They give a faithful and ungarnished description of their state when left to themselves, their own imaginations, surmisings, wills, and determinations. The description is too depressing to dwell upon, and the regions of darkness and death here discovered to the living child of God are too painful and gloomy to linger in. He loves to be raised out of them by the power of sovereign love and grace, and to experience that which is blessedly set before us in Eph. ii. 4—6. After a very painful description of the natural state of the saints, the apostle says: "But." That "*But*" is God's breakwater, over which the floods of sin, death, enmity, and wrath can never pass to hurt or destroy the scattered refugees of hope. This is God's own glorious declaration which cannot be disannulled or made of no effect: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins." Mark! it is not when we were mourning over our sins and corruptions, but, "When we were dead in sins," He loved us, and "hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." All this is brought about by that glorious One set before us in Eph. i. 17, where the apostle prays: "That the God of our

Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." By the power, grace, and indwelling of the Spirit of Christ we are lifted up far above all those corrupt, earthly, sensual, and devilish principles so graphically and painfully enumerated in Isaiah lix.

Last Sunday morning we were privileged to dwell upon the humbling truths recorded here, especially the portion preceding this morning's text: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood." Whatever form the enemy may assume, he will come in like a flood, seemingly swamping the very life of God in the experience of His children. The thought of this causes me to sigh,—

"When rising floods my soul o'erflow,  
When sinks my strength in waves of woe,  
Saviour, Thy timely aid impart  
To raise my head and cheer my heart."

From the dark, gloomy, and creature side of the picture we gladly turn to contemplate the light, reviving, and Divine side of the picture, and there see the triumphs of the Holy Ghost over sin, error, death, and the devil, in the experience of all the members of the body of Christ who are blessed with spiritual oneness with their great and glorious Head. "The Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a Standard against him."

II.—THE GODHEAD OF THE HOLY GHOST—"The Spirit of the LORD."

III.—HIS GRACIOUS WORK—"Shall lift up a Standard against him."

IV.—THE GLORIOUS RESULT—"Shall put him to flight." (Margin).

II.—THE GODHEAD OF THE HOLY GHOST—"The Spirit of the LORD." As I pointed out to you from Matt. xiii. 39, the enemy is that wicked one, the devil. He ever manifests his enmity against the Christ of God, and against all in spiritual oneness with Him. At this time he usurps the crown and sceptre of our glorious King Emmanuel in these death-doomed regions. During the dark days of our unregeneracy he usurped a dear Redeemer's place in our lives and affections, and now he oft-times comes in with a flood of evil suggestions, vile injections, and accursed unbelief, causing us to question the reality of the Spirit's gracious dealings in us. With craft and subtlety he

also steals in gently, and we are caught in the swamps of hellish indifference. Here we are taught feelingly to confess,—

“And more the treacherous calm I dread,  
Than tempests breaking o’er my head.”

But the testimony of God’s blessed Word is: “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a Standard against him.” In the face of this and other kindred declarations, we live in a Spirit-dishonouring day. In some places His existence is slightly acknowledged. In others He is mentioned only to be insulted. In the cathedrals and churches of the Establishment you will hear Him mentioned in the Doxology; but when you listen to the preacher, you find He is ignored altogether. You may hear something concerning the Father’s love; but, what is it? It is spurious love, and therefore no love at all. It is declared to be love to everybody, which in the long run may prove to be love to nobody. The God of the Arminian loves, and leaves His children to themselves, neglects and leaves them to starve and perish. You know what they do in this country to fathers who neglect their families. You may listen to something about the Son trying to save, but failing in the attempt—something about Him as a Husband who is a general lover. Such love is wanton and adulterous. According to this, harlots must be attended to while the true wife is neglected or lost. You may hear something of the Divine Spirit, something about His influence, something about His striving, something about His doing His best; but rarely anything about His glorious sovereignty. I love that clear confession of faith in the Nicene creed, recited in all the churches of the Establishment on Sunday mornings: “And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.” That just suits me. It is in perfect accordance with the experience of my heart. I love to honour the Spirit, because without His power, grace, and indwelling, the Father’s love is nothing to me, and the Son’s affection is but a fancy. Without the Holy Spirit, God Himself must cease to be, so far as the experience of His children are concerned. I love to sing with all my heart: “Glory be to the Father,” for His electing love; “and to the Son,” for His redeeming love; “and to the Holy Ghost,” for His regenerating mercy. “As it was in the beginning.” What? Glory, glory, glory to JEHOVAH, Three-in-One and One-in-Three. “Is now.” Where? In the hearts of the living in Jerusalem, and, thank God, in the hearts of His children in Grove Chapel. “And ever shall be,” according to the Saviour’s declaration in John xiv. 16: “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, *that He may abide with you for ever.*” “World without end.” What world? The world of the

Father's election—the world of the Son's redemption—the world of the Spirit's regeneration—the world of JEHOVAH'S preservation and glorification. When I look into my Bible and experience the truths recorded therein, in my heart, I delight in the three-fold cord of everlasting love which can never be broken. This is the cable which bears the strain of all the storms, temptations, and tribulations of this sinful world. One end of it securely holds my heart and will not let it go, while the other end is held by the anchor of hope within the veil, which firmly holds on to the Rock of eternal Ages. It matters not how much strain may be brought to bear upon it by floods of sin and blasts of hell, the cord of everlasting love and unchanging affection can never give way. I love to contemplate the Divine Three-in-One JEHOVAH as set before us in the written Word, and revealed in the heart by JEHOVAH the Spirit. Here I know the Holy Ghost in His eternal and unchanging oneness with the Father and the Son. In the work of creation I behold Him. Turn to Gen. i. 26, 27, and there you see the plurality of persons in the Godhead: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him"—that is, after the image, pattern, or design settled upon in the eternal counsels which the Son should assume in the womb of the virgin. JEHOVAH'S designs in covenant stretched beyond His works in creation, to the new creation of which Christ Jesus is the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last. He created this world as a platform for the display of His mysteries of redeeming love, and for the revelation of His manifold wisdom in the salvation, preservation, and glorification of His Church by Christ Jesus. Read the first verses of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." The creation of chaos and confusion, darkness and disorder, was wholly of God, and is a representation, spiritually, of the first movings in the new creation when darkness and distress abound in a new-born soul. "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Turn to Psalm xxxiii. 6: "By the Word"—that is, by Christ the eternal Word—"of the LORD"—that is, JEHOVAH the Father—"were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the Breath of His mouth"—that is, JEHOVAH the Spirit. He moved, or brooded over the darkness and disorder, out of which He brought forth light and life, order and perfection. He moved upon the face of the waters before the command went forth: "Let there be light." So it is in the spiritual experience of every true-born child of God. Disorder, then order. Darkness, then light. Imperfection, then perfection. But, disorder, darkness, and imperfection are in self, while order, light, and perfection are in Christ alone. Let us look at another portion where the

Spirit appears in His glorious equality with the Father and the Son. You will find it in Isaiah vi. 3: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts." Holy Father; Holy Son; Holy Spirit. "The whole earth is full of His glory," or, "*His glory is the fulness of the whole earth.*" When Isaiah saw the glory of the Great Three-in-One, he cried: "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." A live coal touched his lips. His iniquity was taken away. His sin was purged. He heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send?" There we see unity. "And who will go for *Us*?" There we behold plurality. Father, Son, and Spirit in undisturbed oneness and equality.

The New Testament also describes the Godhead of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. Turn with me to Matt. xxviii. 18, 19: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations." Because all power is Mine, and I will manifest it by the operation of My Spirit: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." Has this been done? The May meetings are coming on, and pretty meetings they are where the sovereign power of the Holy Ghost is hated and despised. If you could listen to the speeches which will be delivered at some of the missionary meetings, you would hear of a disappointed Christ, and a defeated Holy Ghost. They say, in so many words, that the purpose of the Father in Christ Jesus has failed in its accomplishment, that the intention of the Father and the command of the Son have come to naught. But I say they have not. "All nations." What nations are these? The nations of the saved, who shall walk in the light of Christ's glory (Rev. xxi. 24). All the subjects of the King of these nations, who have existed, have been taught through the testimony of Christ. "Baptizing them." Baptizing who? All nations. Not a few here and there in the midst of these nations; but all the nations of them that are saved. All these nations must be taught and baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Now, you go through the Acts of the Apostles, and, I tell you, you cannot find a single instance of baptism in, or with, water performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. All the cases mentioned were in the name of the Lord Jesus. But where a God-sent man goes forth with a God-given testimony, and he preaches the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Pet. i. 12), it is his gracious privilege to baptize testimonially in the name of the Father electing, the Son redeeming, and the Holy Ghost regenerating and confirming. That is the baptism which my soul truly loves, and I look for it in the experience of every one brought by a precious Christ into His house of wine, to sit at His table, and to feast upon His love. Every soul that enters into the gates of glory must, by



Divine testimony, own and acknowledge the sovereignty of the Father in the choice or rejection of whom He will—the right of the Son to redeem or reprobate whom He will—and the right of the Holy Ghost to call or harden whom He will. At Calvary, one thief soared away to the heights of eternal delight, while the other sank to the depths of eternal despair. The saved one had no personal obedience before or after regeneration to glory in, but he rejoiced in the experimental possession of that blessed One, upon whose bosom he was privileged to lean.

Come with me now to that marvellous declaration in Col. ii. 2: "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Not simply in Christ, but in God, the Father, and Christ. Here the Holy Ghost as God is named first. Why is this? Because of that which is so clearly stated in one of the Creeds, and which I endorse with all my heart: "*And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another; but the whole Three Persons are co-eternal together; and co-equal. So that in all things the unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity, is to be worshipped.*" In Matt. xxviii. 19, the Father is named first, the Son second, and the Holy Ghost third. Turn to 2 Cor. xiii. 14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." Here you see the Lord Jesus Christ is named first, the Father second, and the Holy Ghost third; while in Col. ii. 2, the Holy Ghost is named first. Why is this? To show that one Person in the sacred Trinity is not afore or greater than another. We thus see that the Holy Ghost is equal with the Father and the Son, and "Who with the Father and the Son together is *eternally worshipped and glorified.*"

We now come to notice the Spirit operating in providence, for, mark you, He is not confined to gracious operations in the experience of God's children, neither is He limited to His works in the elect. He works in, with, and by, reprobate persons for the accomplishment of the Father's purposes of grace toward His elect. "Where do you find that?" is your inquiry. Turn to Num. xxiv., where you have a description of that wretched character Balaam. At the 2nd verse we read: "*And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding, according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.*" Read the 4th verse: "He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling, but having his eyes open." Mark well chap. xxiii. 5: "And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth." With solemn, sacred feelings we may well think of these things. Depend upon it, I think about them frequently. The question arises within me, "Has the Lord

put words in my mouth, while all that I call experience is nothing but fleshly fancy?" My heart is wrung with the bitter suspicion that my religion has been brought about through association with men of God, acquaintance with spiritual hymns, and experimental biographies. I have some awful reckonings up sometimes in the court of conscience before my God. In the divisions of God's Reuben there are great searchings of heart, and the men who can stand the searchings are few indeed. The Holy Ghost came upon Bezaleel and others "to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carrying of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship" (Exod. xxxi. 2—6). The Spirit of the Lord moved Samson with strength to kill a roaring lion (Judges xiv. 5, 6), to slay thirty men of Ashkelon (verse 19), and at last to pull down the house of the lords of the Philistines about their ears (Judges xvi. 25—30). According to carnal, fleshly religious notions, these were pretty ways of working under the power of the Holy Ghost. I can see the blessed Spirit working in creation and in providence; but I love most of all to experience His gracious work in me, and I search through the pages of Divine inspiration to find corroborative evidence of it.

But look at Him, as He is described in the blessed Book, as the Author and Maintainer of spiritual life in the souls of God's living children. Turn with me to John xvi. 8: "And when He is come." "He." The Comforter, the Paraclete, the inward Advocate of God's people. "When He is come, He will reprove," or convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. This is the world of God's redeemed, who are taught that all they have, and all they can do independently of God-wrought faith, is sin. Do we sing? We sin. Do we attempt to pray? We sin. Do we preach? We sin. Do we listen? We sin. Everything apart from Christ is sin. "Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." Righteousness to be found alone in the finished work of Christ. "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Not of judgment *to come*; but of the judgment of sin, Satan, death, and hell by the glorious Surety of the covenant upon Calvary's tree. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." There are many of God's weaklings now who cannot bear, but have to be borne with. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself." The Spirit is not egotistical. He seeks not His own glory, but the glory of Christ. When the Saviour was upon earth, He sought not His own glory, but the glory of Him who sent Him. So the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, speaks not of Himself, but delights to glorify the Father in His purposes and promises, and to glorify the Son in His person and perfect ings

"But whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." From these Scriptures, and from the experience of my own heart, I know that the Spirit is not a mere emanation—not an influence. He is a real, true, and proper person. He wills, He speaks, He acts, He teaches, He searches, He intercedes, He helps, He comforts, He guides to glory. See how blessedly He is described in Isa. xi. 2, where I would have you notice the number seven, denoting abundance, diversity, and perfection:—1st. The Spirit of the LORD. 2nd. The Spirit of wisdom. 3rd. The Spirit of understanding. 4th. The Spirit of counsel. 5th. The Spirit of might. 6th. The Spirit of knowledge. 7th. And of the fear of the LORD. In reference to every one of these there are spiritual necessities and perplexities created in our experience in which the Holy Ghost will meet us and open up to our astonished gaze the riches of the Father's love, the treasures of the Saviour's grace, and cheer and comfort our hearts with His own infinite and inexhaustible resources. Thus we see Him a glorious Person, the Sovereign JEHOVAH, whom we worship and adore.

III.—HIS GRACIOUS WORK—"Shall lift up a Standard against him." Against whom? Against the enemy. Whatever form the enemy may assume, the Spirit of JEHOVAH, or JEHOVAH the Spirit, shall lift up a standard against him. What is a standard? Every Briton who has a spark of British pluck in him, delights to think of the honour attached to the standard of his country, and he cannot divest himself of this national pride. Even when God in the riches of His grace, and the communications of His Spirit, gives him to know that he is a citizen of no mean city, even then, the child of God in these realms of England loves to see Judah's lion displayed upon the standard of his country, and to feel that he is an Englishman. JEHOVAH has thrust signal honour upon this country. Here and there His elect are found in clusters. Go to America, the land of boasted freedom, and where will you find a gathered company of God's elect? Where will you hear God's election of a people in Christ Jesus declared? Where will you find a church, chapel, or meeting-house where God's Gospel is faithfully preached? I have known one or two who have visited the United States, who, when there, would gladly have crept into any out-of-the-way place to hear an unconditional Gospel preached, but they were unable to find one. Destitute as England is, it knows of no such spiritual destitution as this. Thank God we have, in some churches of the Establishment, in many Baptist chapels, and in some Independent places of worship, the truth of God enunciated in its purity, preciousness, and power. We can sit under

our own vine, and under our own fig-tree, a precious Christ, none daring to make us afraid. Thanks be to our preserving and protecting God, we live in a day when the fires of religious persecution flame not. Denominationalism, or sectarianism was ever the cause of this hellish work. In the days of Mary the Papists persecuted the Protestants. In the reign of Elizabeth the Protestants persecuted the Papists. In the days of the Stuarts the Episcopalians persecuted the Puritans and the Covenanters of Scotland, while the Puritans in their turn became persecutors on the other side of the Atlantic. That is what religion, without spiritual life, will do for a man. "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones." But here we are, in the gracious providence of God, free from all such fiendish persecutions, and may He in His mercy continue to us an immunity from them.

What is a standard? Sometimes it is styled, in God's Word, an ensign, or, a banner. We Britons call it a flag. And we rejoice in the fact, that in every part of the known globe, where the flag of Britain waves in the breeze, slaves cannot exist, and oppressors are not tolerated. But when we are led from the natural to the spiritual, how grand and glorious does the truth of God appear! The British standard sinks into insignificance here. Turn with me to Exod. xvii. 15, after Amalek was defeated by Joshua, "the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it JEHOVAH-NISSI: *The Lord my Banner.*" The British standard is made of perishable material, but this is indestructible, enduring, a banner of everlasting love (Song of Solomon ii. 4). JEHOVAH-JESUS Himself is the Banner, Ensign, and Standard of His people according to Isaiah's prophecy: "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious" (Isa. xi. 10).

Thus the standard is the rallying-point for all true and faithful soldiers. Around it are gathered the followers of their leader and commander. So to Jesus shall the armies of the redeemed be gathered, and distinguished as chosen, and called, and faithful (Rev. xvii. 14). Turn with me to Psa. lx. 4: "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of Thy truth." Because of the word of the truth of the Gospel the banner shall be displayed. Mark you, it is not because of mere abstract truth, but God's truth in the love of it. What is truth without love? Something that I do not want. In the experience of God's love and truth, I feel my heart burn with love to Him in return. Here I glory in His everlasting Gospel, rejoice in the sovereignty of His grace, and in the eternal salvation and security of His people. The moving of the standard is the sign for the advance of the army. The

standard is unfurled, the trumpet sounds, the ensign goes forth, and the army follows at the commander's bidding. Let the standard be struck, dismay and consternation may seize the troops; but as long as it is maintained in its position, the soldiers are inspired with confidence and encouragement. We see this illustrated in the account of Cæsar's invasion of this country. On the approach of his fleet to the shores of Kent one of the soldiers leaped into the sea with the Roman standard, in the face of the opposing Britons. This inspired the Roman army with courage, and following their standard they were eventually flushed with victory. This is the case when the standard of eternal love, life, light, and liberty is unfurled before the soldiers of the Captain of our salvation, the Leader and Commander of the redeemed armies. Then they are inspired with hope and courage, they proceed from strength to strength, they advance conquering to conquer, until they are more than conquerors through Him that loved them. But oftentimes the soldiers of King Emmanuel feel themselves put to rout. Those of you who know what it is to wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places, and to meet the world, the flesh, and the devil in daily conflict are frequently conscious of failure and defeat, the ranks around you are thinned, many fall beneath the fiery darts of Satan, yet you are preserved. Many depart from Zion's ways, yet you are kept faithful, and enabled by His grace to fight the good fight of faith. Sometimes when faith has seemed to sink in black despair, the appearance of the Standard has inspired you with hope, and you have been blessed with the sweet assurance of salvation, succour, and security in the person and work of Christ.

I remember, some years ago, looking at some old colours as they hung from the roof of one of our old minsters. The names of places noted in military annals appeared upon them. I could see on one, Waterloo, and upon others Alma and Inkerman. You may depend upon it, that there are the names of many places inscribed upon the glorious old flag of Gospel grace. There we may see Gethsemane, where our Captain fought, and fell, and triumphed over Satan, death, and hell. Look again. There we see Calvary, where our glorious Leader vanquished sin, guilt, and condemnation, by which He brought life and immortality to light by His Gospel. In Old Testament vision and prophecy He was promised to fight the battles of His people, while they should stand still and behold their salvation accomplished wholly by Him. In the Standard lifted up and unfurled by JEHOVAH the Spirit we behold and enjoy Gospel grace and glory, which is the cause of all true consolation and encouragement to the hearts of Christ's soldiers. But notice the Standard-Bearer. As an earthly ensign goes forth with the standard to battle, many a heart throbs with anxiety and hope for his safety. A shot at a venture, or one levelled with deadly

aim, may bring him down to dust and death. But our Standard-Bearer is invincible and invulnerable. He stands untouched and unmoved in the thickest of the fight. Let Satan's fiery darts and hell's dark arrows fly thickly around Him, still He maintains His ground. Let Him be unheeded by the vast majority of those who profess to be the soldiers of Christ, yet to the true-hearted He will appear in His sovereign power lifting up the standard, taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us. Does sin assail me? He will reveal to my waiting and wanting heart the all-cleansing blood of my Saviour and Redeemer. Does a sense of condemnation distress me? He takes of the righteousness of Christ my God and tells me it is mine. Do doubts and fears prevail and perplex me? He takes of the faith of the Son of God and assures me it is mine. Do anxieties and cares cause my sad spirit to droop, and inbred corruption appear to stifle the life of God within me? The Spirit of the Lord alone can, and graciously will, make an utter end of them.

"When sins and fears prevailing rise,  
And fainting hope almost expires  
Jesus"—

by the grace, energy, and anointing of Thy Spirit—

"to Thee I lift mine eyes—  
To Thee I breathe my soul's desires."

Yes, when guilt is experienced in the conscience, when Satan, sin, and death seem to have all their own way with the living child of God, the Spirit of the Lord in His sovereign might will work and put them all to flight. Here we are brought to consider—

IV.—THE GLORIOUS RESULT—"Shall put him to flight" (margin). Though enemy after enemy, and flood after flood shall come in to mar the sweet enjoyment of a Saviour's love, the chosen and redeemed of the Lord shall safely outride them all. Fowler's sweet words are gloriously true of Zion's pilgrims:—

"They may on the main of temptation be toss'd;  
Their sorrows may swell as the sea;  
But none of the ransom'd shall ever be lost,  
The righteous shall hold on his way."

Do floods of accursed unbelief assail me? The Spirit of the Lord will reveal to me the precious truth that my Leader and Commander, the Captain of the Lord's host, the Captain of my salvation, has fought for me, believed for me, and relied upon every part of the Father's Word for me. Am I brought into dark and dreary spots, wounded and bleeding behind my shield, fainting and feeling my inability to cry for succour, and afraid I shall be left to perish on the field among the slain? The faithful Witness of the covenant, the invincible and invulnerable Standard-Bearer will not fail me; but will lift up a precious, trusting, believing Christ in my heart, which shall put accursed

unbelief to flight. Am I beset by a dumb devil, and know not how to pray? The covenant Comforter will reveal One to me who opens His mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction (Prov. xxxi. 8). He will sweetly interest me in the prayers of the Mediator, the intercession of my great High Priest, and the all-powerful pleadings of the Advocate with the Father on my behalf, and thus the dumb devil is put to flight. In the presence of my God I am accused and assaulted again and again by Satan at my right hand (Zech. iii.); but the Spirit of the Lord reveals my covenant Angel, and the very moment He appears, Satan cannot withstand Him. Know ye anything of favours so precious, so glorious? If so, your waiting and adoring hearts shall know what that means, which is oftentimes set down as future, but which the favoured child delights in as a present spiritual reality: "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. xii. 10, 11).

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

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#### HYMN.

LORD, the conflict grows severer,  
 Yet I cannot quit the field:  
 Gracious Captain, be Thou nearer,  
 Teach me how Thy sword to wield;  
     By Thy Spirit  
 All my inbred foes shall yield.

Earth and hell are now uniting  
 To obstruct my journey home;  
 Thus I'm call'd to daily fighting,  
 O, let Thy salvation come;  
     By Thy Spirit  
 I shall more than overcome.

Thou hast all my armour given;  
 Thou hast placed my crown in view;  
 All my strength must come from heaven,  
 While such potent foes pursue;  
     By Thy Spirit  
 I shall every sin subdue.

Though surrounded with temptation,  
 And a trait'rous host annoy;  
 Yet the Captain of salvation  
 Will *His* foes and *mine* destroy;  
     By His Spirit  
 I shall gain the Victor's joy.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## A NEW CREATION.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
AUGUST 18TH, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."—2 Cor. v. 17.

THE epistle in which our text appears abounds in contrasts from the beginning to the end. The apostle, as led by the Holy Ghost, maintains this style of teaching in a striking and telling manner. Turn with me to chap. i. 5. Here he contrasts the sufferings of Christ abounding in the child of God with the consolations which abound by Christ. At the close of the 2nd chap. we meet with a very solemn contrast which is seen by the enlightened and spiritual eye throughout the whole of God's most Holy Word. The carnal mind objects to and hates the contrast drawn between the living and the dead, the elect and the reprobate, the redeemed and the unredeemed, the regenerate and the unregenerate. Paul's testimony invariably wrought this contrast. See! "Now, thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ. "Happy man!" some of you may be ready to say, "if he was always able to triumph in Christ." But it so happened that he did not always have occasion to triumph feelingly in Christ; no, not even when blessed with the clearest and brightest evidences of his union to Him. When the sufferings of Christ were abounding in him, there was no experience of triumph, though the sufferings were spiritual indications of the possession of Divine life, light, and love. Read this portion after this fashion, which is perfectly correct: "*Now, thanks be unto God which at all times leadeth us in triumph in Christ.*" You see, God in Christ is our triumphant Leader. He always triumphs over Satan, sin, and self in the very experience of His child, whether that experience be of life or of death. "And maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge



by us in every place. For we"—not our testimony, but *we* through the testimony—"are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" The burden of the word of the Lord caused Paul to feel his insufficiency, while he knew that his sufficiency was of God. The third chapter is full of contrasts. Man's commendation with God's. Man's writing with the Spirit's. Man's insufficiency with God's sufficiency. The Old Testament with the New. The letter with the spirit, condemnation with righteousness. The fourth chapter contains many wonderful contrasts and paradoxes. Look at the 8th verse: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair." I think I hear a tried one say, "That is not me!" Look at the margin, my friend. We who are distressed and perplexed are "*not altogether without help or means.*" "Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." We do fall, but not from grace, being upheld by a loving, omnipotent hand. At the end of the chapter we see wonderful contrasts between present afflictions and future glory, temporal and eternal things. The fifth chapter abounds with spiritual contrasts. Each of them appears to lead us to the contemplation of the glorious truths and spiritual realities set forth in the words I have read as my text:

"Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

In considering this vast and all-important subject, we will endeavour to notice—

I.—THE CONNECTION—"Therefore."

II.—THE CHARACTER—"If any man be in Christ."

III.—THE CONDITION—"A new creature."

IV.—THE IMMUNITIES ENJOYED—"Old things are passed away."

V.—THE PRIVILEGES POSSESSED—"Behold, all things are become new."

I.—THE CONNECTION—"Therefore." This is the conclusion of the apostle's argument, or of the truths he had declared for the instruction, comfort, and edification of the Corinthian Christians, and through them of the Church of God in all succeeding generations. His conclusion is, that all old things, even those of Divine appointment, having served their purpose and waxen old, must pass away for ever as of no value whatever to the new creation work in Christ Jesus. "*Therefore.*" This word directs our minds to the preceding context. Look at ver. 14: "For the love of Christ constraineth us." In these words we have a figure of speech setting forth the irresistible power of the love of Christ. Like the current of a mighty river, it bears the souls of God's elect to life, and peace, and joy, found only in

the ocean of Divine affection. Turn to Psalm xli. 4: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." Again, Rev. xxii. 1: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." The progress of this river of eternal love is beautifully expressed in the language of Kelly,—

"All victorious is its course.  
Nothing can withstand its force."

The course of this river of God's eternal, uninfluenced, invincible, and irresistible love is hidden from the view of the carnal mind. Its sovereignty is seen in its proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It runs to the full extent of a redeemed sinner's necessities, coming just where he is, sweeping away like a flood all his transgressions, sins, and iniquities, overcoming his old prejudices, slaying his natural enmity to God's way of saving him, and bringing him into association and communion with the great and glorious Three-in-One. "For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." A precious and glorious truth. When Christ died, all His members were dead in Him. Dead to the law which had exhausted all its claims upon them. Dead to sin which lost its damning power over them when Christ their Surety died. Sin as they may, and here I will tell you something more, sin as they *must*, their sins can never damn them. God's love is too vast, His grace too rich, His compassions too great to admit of the thought for a single moment. See! "And He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." To live to Christ and not to self is the order of the Gospel day. But, say you, I do not find that to be the fact. Neither do I. Why is this? Because in our so-called Gospel Churches and causes of truth, amongst those who profess to be separated from the world by the Gospel of Christ, there is more seen of the spirit of the first Adam than of the last; there is more of the temper of the old man manifested than the meekness of the new man; there is a greater exhibition of self than of the exaltation of Christ; there is so much determination to have one's own way, to gain one's own points, and to work one's own will; there is so much of "Thy will be done" on the knees, and "My will be done" on the feet. But as the redeemed sinner is brought by the power of God the ever-blessed Spirit into communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, and into experimental oneness with Him in His sufferings, he lives not to himself, but to Him who loved him, died for him, rose again for him, appears in heaven for him, and is ready in every season of temptation and trial to minister to his necessities and succour him with His richest consolations.

Now notice verse 16: "Wherefore henceforth know we no

man after the flesh." What a mercy! We are not on the look out for the infirmities and failings of the tried and tempted brethren of Christ. We are not ready to judge the halting children of God after the sight of our eyes or according to the outward appearance. We are not eager to sit in the judgment seat to condemn those who, though sinning, are so near and dear to Christ, who has compassion upon the ignorant and upon them that are out of the way. Possessing His Spirit, we are brought down to the footstool of sovereign mercy to know and own ourselves the chiefest of sinners and the vilest of the vile. I know that the pietist, the very precise and proper, will be ready here to call me to order and question the truth of all this; but I know it is so by painful experience, and every God-begotten, Spirit-quicken'd child of God will cry with Paul, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing;" for there is in me a concentration of all that is abominable, bad, and depraved in connection with fallen humanity. Yes, this is a solemn and terrible fact, and when I know and feel it by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, how can I sit in judgment upon the weak, the erring, and the fallen? Indeed, I cannot. Yet oft-times I find myself on old covenant ground speaking in old covenant terms, acting according to old covenant law and not according to new covenant liberty, judging according to wrath and not according to love, not realising the blessedness set before us in this precious portion, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh." I like this when I am enabled to see it in the light of the action of the two sons of Noah. Mark! "To the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus i. 15). I do not ask *you* of depraved tastes to look this way, you whose delight is to seek out what you consider to be the impure portions of this blessed Book. To me there are no such portions, for "every word of God is pure" (Prov. xxx. 5). You remember the scene in the vineyard. Noah was drunk. His son Ham saw and reported his father's shame, but the other two sons took a garment, went backwards and covered their father's nakedness. They would not see it. They made as though they knew it not. Ah, my dear friends, it is something after that manner that God, in His rich and sovereign mercy, deals with His poor, weak, and erring children, and He brings them into the sweet enjoyment of that grace through which He will not and cannot see the failures, falls, and imperfections of His people in covenant union with Him. Thus favoured and blessed, they will be ever ready to walk backward, cast their eyes another way, and lend their ears to other tales altogether than those of the failures, falls, or inconsistencies of the living children of God.

"Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." The Jew who had been

brought by grace from Judaism to spiritual life in Christ might boast of Christ belonging to his nation after the flesh. Christ Himself ignored all this, and owned all those who heard and kept the Word of God, irrespective of their nationality, as His true relatives. This is laying the axe of Divine truth at the root of all fleshly and sensuous religion. We have sought after a fleshly manner, and with fleshly emotions we have oftentimes embraced Him; but now we are taught to know Him, approve of Him, and appreciate Him in a heavenly and spiritual manner. Mary Magdalene received a precious lesson in this, as recorded in John xx. 11—18. She sought her Lord in the regions of death, but He revealed Himself to her in the regions of life. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary." She knew His voice, and said unto Him, "Rabboni; which is to say, Master." The very One who had "won her affections and held her heart fast." She evidently was about to embrace Him, when He kept her at a distance on nature's ground, saying: "Touch Me not: for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and to your God." The heart of Christ was in heaven with His Father, and He would have Mary's there also. He would have her not linger in selfish gratification with Him, but go and tell His brethren of His ascension to the home and the glory He was going to possess for them. Let me ask you, Where is the place for true communion with our Lord Jesus Christ? Paul found it in the third heaven (2 Cor. xii. 2). See how he leads the mind to this in Phil. iii. 20: "For our conversation is in heaven." Our citizenship, our home is there. This is set before us throughout the whole of that precious family epistle, the Epistle to the Ephesians. Blessed with Christ in the heavenlies (chap. i. 3); glorified with Christ in the heavenlies (chap. i. 20); resting with Christ in the heavenlies (chap. ii. 6); revealing the mystery of redeeming love to the angels in the heavenlies (chap. iii. 10); and wrestling with wicked spirits in the heavenlies (chap. vi. 12). The heavenlies form the scene for Divine communion. Just turn to that 12th chap. of 2nd Corinthians: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven," there to enjoy a blessed revelation of grace too wonderful for him to relate. With this revelation "a thorn in the flesh" and "the messenger of Satan" must be encountered. But see! The place for Divine communion is up yonder. Mary must not linger amid the shades of darkness, desertion, and death. While her body was upon earth her spirit must ascend with the risen and glorified body of her Lord to His home, and to her's. Know ye anything of an experience so blessed as this? I do not ask, Is this your lot every hour of the day? but I do ask, Is not this a spiritual reality according

to the written Word, according to the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and according to the judgment He has given you, however much you may be buffeted by Satan, burdened by sin, or bowed down under the body of sin and death? Ay, indeed it is. Look here! There is no true place of worship nor true acceptable worship, but in living identification with the glorified God-Man up yonder. My dear friends, we may meet together to sing sweet hymns, we may be moved by prayerful words from fluent lips, and endorse the clear enunciations of a faithful preacher of God's truth; but if the heart is not lifted up by the power of the Holy Ghost, if Christ is not spiritually present in the midst; if there is no identification with Him in the new life, in the new creation, there can be no real worship in God's account.

"*Therefore.*" Another word upon this. Someone has well said, that the cross of Christ is God's monument erected over the grave of all carnal ordinances, sensuous ceremonies, fleshly sacrifices, earthly types, and fleeting shadows; but I say, that the cross of Christ is God's monument over the grave where He has buried all human distinctions, all human modes, all human means in matters pertaining to Himself. There you have something to think about. You may meet with a Churchman who has more of the steeple in his head than of grace in his heart, or you may come in contact with that pest of society, a *political Dissenter*, who is full of strife and contention; mark you, there is not a pin of difference between the two in God's estimation, or in the estimation of the spiritually-minded and Spirit-taught child of God. These will be ever looking at their order, rules, rites, regulations, and ceremonies, but can have no true apprehension or appreciation of the glorious truth revealed in the words of the text: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "*Therefore,*" because the revelation of God to His people through Christ, in Christ, with Christ, and by Christ, makes a clean sweep of the creature altogether, drives away all his plans, schemes, doings, and dealings, and makes known to us the glorious fact, that the salvation of elect man is God's work from first to last. God the Father *for me* in purpose before the worlds were framed, and to all eternity. God the Son *with me* in His life of suffering and sorrow here below. God the Spirit *in me*, regenerating, restoring, and refreshing. "*Therefore,*" all that I may have, and everything I can have as the means of grace, or as the hope of glory, must be wholly of God and by God.

II.—THE CHARACTER—"If any man be in Christ." Notice the word *man* was not used by the apostle when he penned this precious portion. It is: "*if any in Christ.*" This excludes all human means, modes, and distinctions. Truth, by the Holy Ghost, is a mighty leveller, as seen in many portions of Paul's epistles. Turn to Gal. iii. 28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek,

there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." In Christ, and spiritually one with Him, there is no assertion of the authority of the stronger over the weaker vessel—nothing about your *lords of creation* there. The Holy Ghost graciously leads the mind into the realisation of glorious equality in Christ Jesus. All of one mind. All of one spirit. You see this also in Gal. v. 15: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." The new creation does not consist in an acknowledgment of a form of sound words, or delight in a clear creed, or prizing the so-called outward means of grace, or ten times more than these. We will come a little closer home than this, which, I expect, will not suit some of you. The other day I saw an announcement in connection with "*The Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews.*" Let me tell you, I am very suspicious concerning what are called *converted Jews* and *converted Papists*. I cannot help it. It may be a little of my old Adam cropping up, but there it is. Where is, there a necessity for such a society as this? The Holy Ghost, by Paul, tells very plainly that the middle wall of partition, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances which stood as a barrier between Jew and Gentile, was broken down by the death of Christ, and now God looks upon mankind as divided into two classes only—the elect and the reprobate—the redeemed and the unredeemed. See Eph. ii. 15: "To make in Himself of twain (elect Jew and Gentile) one new man." Blessed be God, there is now no distinction whatever between the two. In Christ all outward distinctions for ever cease. Here I would ask, What room is there, on this ground of spiritual privilege, for the Churchman to assert his superiority over the Dissenter, or for the Dissenter to throw his stones at the Churchman? The cross of Christ forbids unseemly squabbles. Some may ask, What do I mean by the cross of Christ? Well, I do not mean that empty bauble which is worshipped and adored by Popish and Protestant idolaters. I do not mean a material cross, or a visible sign, but that which every one in Christ must take up and bear in spiritual union with Him. What is the cross? You will find it in John xvii. 14: "I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them." Look at John xv. 18: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." Because of the sovereign and eternal decree of election is brought home to the heart, and confessed with the lips, because the Word has been received in much affliction, because the cross of Christ is understood in its spirituality and power, therefore the world, both *pious* and profane, religious and irreligious, will hate the child of God. In the word of the truth of the Gospel we see God's monument upon the grave where all human distinctions, commandments, sacrifices, and offerings lie buried.

*"In Christ."* A glorious position. I hear sometimes from the lips of those whom I believe to be spiritually taught, expressions contrary to Scriptural facts. Such have spoken of being *put in Christ*. Let us cling to chapter and verse. There is nothing so convincing as a "What saith the Scripture?" Put into Christ? The people of God were eternally in Christ, so there can be no such thing as *putting into Christ*. Turn to 1 Cor. i. 30: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." Not in Him according to that Popish figment and vain delusion, by baptismal regeneration. A friend once asked me whether I had seen Dean Alford's translation of the New Testament. I at once directed his attention to the Dean's translation of the words in Titus iii. 5: "*the washing of regeneration,*" which he renders, "*the font of regeneration.*" Poor Dean! This discovers the lamentable fact that he believed in that delusion of the devil, that a child is *put into Christ* and received into Christ the very moment a few drops of polluted water are sprinkled or poured upon it. You ask, Why do you call it polluted water? Because the very moment the fingers of a clean-handed *priest* (?) touch the water, you would look at it a few times before you would be tempted to drink it. Water is polluted the very moment it receives a human touch. There are thousands so besotted with error and beguiled by Satan as to believe that carnal means will produce spiritual effects. This is contrary to our Lord's words to Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6). Yes, there are thousands who believe when a child is brought to the font, the water applied to it, and a few words pronounced over it, that moment it becomes a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. There are those also who hold that without adult dipping there can be no regeneration. When I say this, I do desire not to be understood as referring in any way to our friends the Particular Baptists, because I know and thank God for it, that these brethren *in Christ* hate and scout such a wretched delusion as much as I do. I allude to the Mormons and to a pestilential sect who style themselves, Christian Brethren, and pretty brethren they are! These hold that the moment a *brother* or *sister* goes through the water every sin is left behind in the bath. But there you have the truth, that not "of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13), ay, wholly of God from first to last the election of grace is found in Christ Jesus. Look here! This is living union. It is not in a mere profession of true religion. It is not in *self* condemned, but in Christ justified and accepted (Eph. i. 6). It is not in Adam dead, but *in Christ* alive (1 Cor. xv. 22). In Christ the last Adam with sin put away, death abolished, and life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel. Not living in the flesh for fleshly gratification; but living in Christ to enjoy the blessings stored up for me in Him.

*In Christ* by sovereign purpose. *In Christ* by sacred purchase. *In Christ* by spiritual power. Thus in Christ a redeemed sinner is a new creation. We will now look at—

III.—THE CONDITION—"A new creature," or a *new creation*. What is it to create? It is not to make or form a new thing out of an old one. It is not to change, it is not to transform, it is not to convert. "A new creation" is not the old nature renovated, adorned, and beautified. It is not the flesh with its corruptions and lusts trimmed and trained; but it is the new and Divine nature with its spiritual blessings, immunities, and privileges. It is not taking old Adam and washing, clothing, and adorning him, making him religious and very pretty to the outward eye. It is not that. It is a new creation altogether. Therefore if I am in Christ Jesus, I am a partaker of a new nature—a partaker of the Divine nature, a partaker of His resurrection life, and all this according to the Father's promise before all worlds. See Titus i. 2: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Life was promised to Christ for His people, and at the set time of favour He communicates it through the ministry of His own Word. How this is brought about, the poor child of God oft-times finds not, and when questioned in reference to it, can only answer in the words of the blind man as recorded in John ix. 25: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Once I was blind and dead to God's Christ, to God's covenant, and to God's salvation; I was dead to all interest in precious atoning blood, justifying righteousness, regenerating grace, restoring mercy, and to that peace of His which passeth all understanding; but now in union with the Lamb and in blessed association with His redeemed worshippers, I love to dwell upon those glorious verities which are found alone in Him, by Him, and through Him. I love the company of those who delight in electing love, redeeming grace, and regenerating mercy. I love to experience those restorings which flow through the wounds of Jesus by the power of the Holy Ghost to my heart.

"A new creation" is alone to be found in union with Him who was *made sin* for His people, that they "*might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*" A new, Divine nature (2 Peter i. 4), not a mere influence, but a real existence in living union with a risen, exalted, and glorified Jesus. This is always attended by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, but it is not the Holy Ghost any more than He, in the formation of the sacred humanity of Jesus in the womb of Mary, was to be confounded with the body of Christ. What a glorious union! One with the Person of a glorified Christ. We cannot find words better suited to describe this than the words of our most glorious Christ in His prayer to the Father, as recorded in John xvii. 21—23: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I



in Thee, *that they also may be one in Us*: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; *that they may be one, even as We are One*. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." This is glorious oneness. As the Divine Three are equally, eternally, and essentially One, so are the members of Christ one with Him, their living Head. This is a marvellous and mysterious oneness which can never be fully known until we stand perfect and complete in the light of His glory. Then we shall know even as we are known. As the Three Persons in the Godhead are One, so are the partakers of *the new creation* one with Christ. He appears in heaven for us, and blessed be His holy name, "as He is so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). If we are one with Him by His Father's electing love, His own redeeming blood, and His Spirit's regenerating grace, then His Father is our Father, His righteousness our righteousness, His nature our nature, His home our home, and His glory our glory.

IV.—THE IMMUNITIES ENJOYED—"Old things are passed away." Blessed be God, that old thing SIN, which, in my unregenerate state, maintained its authority over me, is gone, *passed away*. How did it pass away? I can only answer you in the language of God's blessed Word. See Isa. liii. 6: "The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26). By the faith of God's own giving I see by the Father's own act, all my sin passed away from me to my adorable Surety and Saviour, and an end made of it by His sin-atoning death. That old thing, THE CURSE OF THE LAW, *passed away*. How? "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." In thus becoming a curse for His people He became the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). "*The end of the law*." What an expressive term! What does it mean? It means that He went to the end of all the law's requirements in the perfect obedience He rendered to its precepts, that He went to the end of all the law's penal threatenings which He silenced by the sufferings He endured. What is the end of a debt? The payment. Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, took and paid every debt owed by His bride, and in the sweet experience of this I can sing,—

"Complete atonement Thou hast made,  
And, to the utmost farthing, paid  
Whate'er Thy people owed;  
How, then, can wrath on me take place,  
If sheltered in Thy righteousness,  
And sprinkled with Thy blood!"

By the application of that precious blood to my heart every

question of sin between me and my God is settled, every transgression over which my chastened spirit has grieved is removed, is *passed away*. That old thing, CONDEMNATION is *passed away*. All this due to me was borne by my sinless Surety, by Him who said to sin, law, condemnation, and death, which sought and found Him, "If ye seek Me, let these go their way" (John xviii. 8). That old thing of fleshly fear, DEATH, *passed away*. "Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel; and when Christ who is our Life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4; 2 Tim. i. 10). Death may be dreaded, but can never be felt by a sinner in living union with Christ. "*Old things are passed away.*" My old notions of salvation by merit, salvation by my fleshly co-operation, salvation by my doing something and Jesus doing the rest, *passed away*. My old degrading views of Christ *passed away*, and now in the light of His glorious Gospel, I see Him altogether lovely, His salvation perfect, His righteousness complete, His intercession all-prevalent, and His glory sure. He is the Beginner and the Finisher of my faith, and the Performer of all things for me in the presence of His Father and mine. We now notice,—

V.—THE PRIVILEGES POSSESSED—"Behold, all things are become new." Yes, a Christian is a new man, with a new life, in a new world. He experiences life in a risen and ascended Christ, and immortality in spiritual oneness with Him. This is the truth which the Lord Jesus spake to Martha recorded in John xi. 25, 26: "I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me *shall never die.*" Martha experienced in herself, "deaths oft;" but in her living and loving Lord she was blessed with many spiritual and sweet revivings. In the words of Christ to Martha we have a wonderful paradox—a *dead believer*, yet in possession of a life that can never die. The time of dissolution will and must come to all those who are not to remain until the coming of the Lord; but this will be to them a ceasing to die and a beginning to live unfettered and free in the eternal embrace of a covenant God in Christ. It is this which cheers the living child of God under many a dark and trying dispensation, which gives him many a gracious lift in the midst of his bondage, and causes him to rejoice in spirit when the hearts of all around him are sad. Then the living in Jerusalem shall know that neither law, sin, Satan, condemnation, death, nor hell, nor all combined, can ever affect his interest in God, nor God's interest in him. In Christ Jesus the new creature enjoys the blessings of this world, even of a world in ruins, yet possessing beauties and blessings rich and rare to the sanctified mind and spiritually illumined eye. The possessor of life in oneness with Christ, though he may not

possess a pennyworth of this world's goods, can look upon the broad lands and beautiful estates of the nobility and say,—

“My Father made them all.”

“*All things are become new.*” LIFE instead of *death*! SALVATION instead of *slavery*! RIGHTEOUSNESS instead of *sin*! JUSTIFICATION instead of *condemnation*! ACCEPTANCE instead of *banishment*! PEACE instead of *enmity*! New affections fixed upon things above. New hopes entering within the veil. New relatives. God my Father. Christ my Brother. The Holy Ghost my Friend and Companion. The saints my associates. Heaven my home. JEHOVAH Three-in-One and One-in-Three my exceeding and eternal joy. And blessed be His holy name, He has put a new-song in my mouth and given me a new heart, by which I can praise Him for bringing me up from the pit of corruption, setting my feet upon the Rock of eternal ages, ordering my goings, holding my hand, and keeping my feet in the way.

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

#### HYMN.

AMAZING grace! a worm of earth  
Ennobled by a second birth,  
And own'd Jehovah's child!  
An object of eternal love—  
An heir to all the joys above  
Who cannot be exiled.

Come, heaven-born soul, your sonship view  
The grace which forms your heart anew,  
Calls forth the filial claim;  
My Father, doubtless Thou art mine,  
For Thou hast given me life Divine,  
And I must own Thy name.

My Father, O, delightful sound!  
I'm with paternal kindness crown'd,  
By God my Father's hand:  
O, how I long to love Him more,  
Obey Him, trust Him, and adore,  
Till near His throne I stand.

My Father, draw my heart away  
From earth, and sin, and self, I pray,  
Let me Thine image bear:  
Feed, clothe, and teach me every day.  
Till I arrive at home, and say  
Thou art my Father there.

JOSEPH IRONS.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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“A CASTAWAY.”

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## A Sermon

PREACHED IN THE HORNS ASSEMBLY ROOM, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
AUGUST 25TH, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”—1 Cor. ix. 27.

**T**HERE were certain characters in the Church at Corinth who were constantly calling into question the apostleship of the writer of this very blessed and instructive epistle. We find throughout the two epistles to the Corinthian Church and the epistle to the Churches of Galatia, the apostle Paul says more concerning His apostleship than in all his other writings put together. The reason is plain. He was vindicating the commission he had received “not of men, neither by man,” but directly from his risen and glorified Lord and Master. You see this in Gal. i. 11: “For I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man.” He did not receive it from any formulary, article, or creed, nor according to vain notions of the Papists and Ritualists of the present day, from the apostolic fathers who were before him. But we see Paul tracing up his call and commission to the Great First Cause of all events, to the One Great Source of all revelation, and to the One Grand Fountain of truth and spiritual communion. He says: “For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Do you desire any spiritual and heavenly communications this morning? Well, as you look for it, long for it, and desire it, ay, as you find in you a Divinely-wrought necessity that you must have it, the desire and the necessity both come from God through the Son of His love by the power of His blessed Spirit. Paul continues: “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in

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No. 164.—PRICE ONE PENNY.

the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it. But when it pleased God." Here you see the ground upon which he found a firm footing for his faith. He traced all his religion up to the Fountain—God. He acknowledged God's good pleasure and all-wise counsel in all things. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb"—there is a separation for you, a work in which neither the apostle himself or any created being could claim a part—"and called me by His grace to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Paul writes not of the manifestation of Christ to him, but of the revelation of God's Son in Him, which is the only true qualification a Gospel minister possesses. He knew full well that conferring with flesh and blood was fatal to the stability of a child of God, and so do I. There is God's Book, and the man who speaks according to the mind and will of God as revealed therein, who is brought into profound subjection to its truths by the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, has much to be thankful for. It is of God's mercy I know that, in standing before you as a preacher of truth, and in looking back to the spots where I have stood, there has been no conference with flesh and blood. It is wholly of the grace of God that I am what I am, and where I am, and am often found at the feet of Jesus willing to do His bidding for the good of any of His brethren; but as for conferring with the flesh, or taking fleshly counsel, such not being in accordance with the Word, it can have no place in my mind as long as the Lord is graciously pleased so to teach me. "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me." What an independent character! Blessed with the assurance of God being by his side, Christ in his heart, and the Holy Ghost enlightening his understanding, that was sufficient for him, and he could get on very well without apostolic aid or interference. "But I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days." A man with such an independent spirit, and freed from all human shackles, may well expect to be the butt for many hellish shafts, and the subject of much defamation and slander. You may rest assured of this, when a man stands in the simplicity which is in Christ and in the power of the Holy Ghost, he will not be free from Satan's fiery darts, nor from the defamation of proud professors; but he can well afford to leave all these matters in His hand that judgeth righteously and wait patiently the result.

It is our privilege this morning to look at a portion of God's most Holy Word which may perplex some and frighten others. These may be ready to put forth their fleshly free-will hands to steady the ark of God's truth, which, according to their short-sighted view, is shaken. There may be some present who fancy

that after all they have heard preached upon the everlasting security and eternal preservation of the Church of God, this one Scripture saps and mines the whole foundation of their faith. Well, it may be God's will to bring about a little clearing away of your doubts in respect to this glorious truth. May He send forth His Spirit-wind, which alone can chase away the fogs, the mists, and the clouds of ignorance and error which have darkened the minds of many of His tried and tempted children. In approaching this subject, I feel I have especially to deal with the elect, redeemed, and regenerate people of God. It is not my intention to attempt to refute any Arminian gloss which has been put upon this portion of inspired truth, yet such erroneous views existing in the minds of many of the living family may be met and scattered to the winds. I hope to meet with the little ones in the family of God, the weaklings in the flock of Christ who long for establishment in the glorious things of God's Gospel. The portion before us has oftentimes been quoted and preached from for the purpose of refuting the truth of the eternal preservation of the Church in Christ Jesus. Mark the words. I do not say, *the final perseverance of the saints*, because there may be such an expression as this which is not at all Scriptural. Many of God's dear children are troubled with the impression that they have not persevered as they ought to have done, therefore they must set to work with the means at their disposal, read the Word, communicate with God's people, attend prayer meetings, and be diligent in the use of the so-called means of grace; but in these things they meet with many stumbling-blocks, failures, falls, and miserable disappointments. I remember the time when I thought I would read God's Word more diligently than ever I did before, communicate with the saints more frequently, pray without ceasing and more fervently, but I found all these to be as so many dry breasts, with no refreshment, consolation, or encouragement to my soul. Yet it has pleased God in His own way, set before us in the experiences of His saints, as recorded in the Scriptures, to bring me by a way that I knew not into a blessed knowledge of Himself, which must stand when all things else decay and fade away.

But I said, this portion has been quoted for the purpose of disproving the eternal preservation of the Church of God in Christ Jesus. Enemies of truth have manifested their enmity in such deceiving expressions as these: "You see, if so highly-favoured a man as the apostle was afraid of becoming a castaway from God's presence, love, and salvation, how much more must we fear!" Mark well this specious deduction! If the apostle Paul doubted the certainty of the covenant verities he preached and taught, doubted whether he, with all the favours JEHOVAH had bestowed upon him, should ever stand before God with acceptance in glory, how much more should poor, weak mortals such as we, doubt, fear, and tremble! If the apostle admitted

the possibility of a saint like himself becoming a reprobate character, an eternal castaway from JEHOVAH'S love and care, is this not sufficient proof that the eternal preservation of the children of God in Christ is only a human figment, and not a Divine fact? To this I at once answer, If such were the admission of the apostle, then I should admit the conclusion arrived at. But, I not only question the truthfulness of the conclusion, but I declare emphatically before God and His people that such a conclusion is a lie of Satan to deceive unstable souls and to perplex many of those for whom Christ died and whom He will most assuredly have at home in glory with Him. We will now look at this perplexing portion, and endeavour to find out whether *the falling from grace* theory is consistent—

I.—With the Father's purpose of love.

II.—With the Son's redemption of His people.

III.—With the Spirit's power in the redeemed ; and

IV.—With the apostle Paul's experience and teaching.

I.—IS THE FALLING FROM GRACE THEORY CONSISTENT WITH THE FATHER'S PURPOSE OF LOVE?

We will see. Let us look at those glorious declarations of grace given by the inspiration of the Spirit in Ephesians i. Here we see that He purposed in Himself to have a people near to Himself, in whom He would be everlastingly glorified, and by whom He would be everlastingly worshipped and adored. In covenant, before the worlds were formed, He set up His Son as the great and glorious Head of grace. To this Head the members were given, and to the members He gave the Head, who held Himself responsible for the eternal preservation, certain salvation, and everlasting security of the whole. To Christ the Head the Father communicated all the blessings of grace and glory with which the members should be endowed irrespective of any condition to be performed on their part. Every blessing freely given. You see this in the third verse: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him." In this we have the Father's purpose of love, even the whole election of grace blessed, chosen, holy, and without blame before Him in Christ the Head. "In love." Mark the punctuation! "In love having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." Predestinated in eternity to the adoption in time, "according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved ;" or, as it may be rendered, "*graced us in the Beloved.*" We thus stand before Him in the person of our Head possessing every grace we need. Some of you are ready to say, We do not experience that! Ah, my dear

friends, you never will experience all that until you stand with Christ in glory,

"Filled with the fulness of your God,  
And lost in His embrace."

Look at that word : "*Graced in the Beloved.*" The grace of love for all the elect, the grace of faith for all the redeemed, the grace of repentance for all His tempted ones, the grace of consolation for all mourners in Zion. It is a glorious fact to contemplate, that JEHOVAH in the riches of His grace, before the foundation of the world, had every grace treasured up for His children against the times of their sin, imperfections, infirmities, failures, and falls. This grace is like Himself, eternal, omnipotent, infinite, invincible, and indefectible. In it His elect people in Christ Jesus have full provision made against every emergency which Satan may suggest, every contingency he may present to their fears, and every perplexity they may experience. See how the apostle repeats this again and again : "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of time He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him : in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Why? "That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ." The Father in covenant trusted Christ with His honour, faithfulness, and glory. He trusted Him with the whole election of grace, with every blessing He designed for them to enjoy, and with all the glories of eternity which must be theirs after every toil, trial, and tribulation is past and gone for ever. Think for a moment upon this momentous question! If the good pleasure of the Father which He purposed in Himself, and the working of all things after the counsel of His own will should meet with failure, the very devils would rejoice, and hell be filled with exultation. If a redeemed one should suffer eternal destruction, Satan would taunt God with His want of foresight, wisdom, and power. If an elect vessel of mercy should fall from grace, all hell might well resound with its shouts of defiance and taunts against a God who so signally failed in the accomplishment of His purpose. But that can never be. We now come to consider—

II.—IS THE FALLING FROM GRACE THEORY CONSISTENT WITH THE SON'S REDEMPTION OF HIS PEOPLE?

The Son's honour was engaged to save with an everlasting salvation all that the Father gave unto Him. In the fulness of time, and all to display the Father's purpose and magnify His grace, all the given ones fell in Adam. Fell from what? From grace? Never. From the love and notice of Him who gave them to His Son? That is an utter impossibility. From what



did they fall? From a state of earthly dignity, pleasure, and happiness, and intercourse with the God of creation and providence. But some of you may be ready to inquire, "What evidence can be given from Gen. iii. that Adam and his wife with the elect of God in his loins fell not from spiritual privileges conferred upon them in Christ?" This, that a seeking God is the glory of the whole of that chapter. When Adam fell, he was not set to the vain task of seeking that God whom he had so wilfully forsaken; but the voice of the LORD God was heard walking in the garden in the cool of the day, calling to Adam, "Where art thou?" When he was found hiding behind the trees of the garden, God declared in his ears, and in the very teeth of the serpent, the glorious news of salvation by the Seed of the woman. In the very garden where sin was first committed, salvation was first revealed. God seeking! God finding! God saving! In many portions of this precious chapter we see God revealing His own glorious Gospel to His fallen Church and people. The woman's Seed should bruise the serpent's head, while the serpent should bruise the heel of the woman's Seed. O what marvellous truth we have in this bruising of the heel! First, we see the sufferings of Christ personal in His sacred humanity here upon earth. Second, we behold the sufferings of Christ mystical, in the temptations, trials, and tribulations experienced by the members of the one body during their earthly pilgrimage. This heel-bruising is in perfect accordance with the revelation of JEHOVAH'S covenant of redemption in Isa. liii. In reading that chapter just notice the change of persons occurring in the language. This shows that all the declarations are not those of the Father to the Son; but in one place the Father speaks to the Son, in another the Son to the Father, while in another the people of God speak of their interest in the sufferings endured and the salvation accomplished by the Surety of the covenant. Here we see glorious reciprocity and mutual interests between the Persons covenanting and those interested in their covenant engagements. Look at ver. 10: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed." When the Father should make the soul of Christ an offering for sin, then Christ should see His seed. "He shall prolong His days," in resurrection life and glory, "and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand." How? "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me" (Johu vi. 37). There you see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in the hand of a risen, exalted, and reigning Saviour. "He shall see of the travail (the fruit) of His soul and shall be satisfied." A woman is in travail, her pangs are great, the child is born, it is dead! Is she satisfied? No, sorrow and disappointment fill her soul. Tell me! Has our great and glorious Surety travailed in soul, laboured to bring to the birth, and all to have dead and damned

souls to present to the Father? Never! If such could be the case, in the presence of the Father He could not stand. See! "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities," to put them all away and make an end of every one of them. "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." That last sentence will do for me. O what a mercy it is for me to know, and that by Divine revelation and spiritual communication, that those for whom Jesus intercedes before the throne are transgressors in their feelings, experiences, and confessions, and ever will be all through their wilderness journey. Jesus came, Jesus laboured, Jesus suffered, Jesus died; but it was not possible for Him to be holden of death. "He prolonged His days" in rising again and entering into heaven's highest glory, where His intercession prevails in the power of these words, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." What did He give Him to do? He gave Him a people to save in Himself with an everlasting salvation. Having returned to the Father, He looks into His face without fear or hesitancy, and says, "Every one given to Me by Thee in covenant I have redeemed with My own blood from death, destruction, Satan, and sin, and eventually, when all Thy purposes of grace are fulfilled, I will present them all perfect and complete before Thee in glory." Listen to His commanding prayer: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). The pleasure of the Lord in the salvation of His elect cannot fail in the slightest particular while in the hand of Christ. Think of this. If it were possible for the purposes of the Father to fail in the hand of Christ, Satan and his crew would laugh at Him throughout eternity. Imagine, if you can, one for whom a precious Christ endured spiritual labour and pangs, one for whom our most glorious Christ shed His precious blood, one for whom He wrought out a perfect righteousness, failing to enjoy all these, and at last falling eternally into the clutches of the devil; why, Satan might then appear in the courts of heaven, look a disappointed Redeemer in the face, and with justice upbraid Him with losing one whom He agreed to keep, one for whom He paid so tremendous a price, one for whom He laboured so hard and so long, one for whom He agonized in blood and sweat in gloomy, dark Gethsemane. But such as this can never be, O no; it is gloriously and irrevocably true, that all that the Father gave to Him shall come to Him, and not one of the given ones shall ever experience an eternal casting out, a casting off, or a casting away (John vi. 37).

### III.—IS THE FALLING FROM GRACE THEORY CONSISTENT WITH THE SPIRIT'S POWER IN THE REDEEMED?

It is our gracious privilege as sound, Scriptural, and spiritual Trinitarians to delight in a threefold cord which can never be broken. It is the threefold cord of covenant love. There is the Father's love in election, the Son's love in redemption, and the Spirit's love in regeneration. The love of the Divine Three is co-equal and co-eternal. The Spirit, who was the Witness to the covenant transactions of the Father and the Son, in the set time to favour Zion, quickens from death and delivers from the hands of the devil the objects of the Father's love and of the Saviour's affection. Now comes the question, Who is the stronger? Satan, or the Spirit? The devil, or the Holy Ghost? Blessed be God, He has not left Himself without witness: here you have it: "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John iv. 4). A Stronger than the strong one comes and turns him out. He not only makes a clean sweep of the house, but He washes, cleanses, and purifies it. He purges it from all sin, all filth, all corruption, and all defilement. That is not like the devil leaving his house for a little while. There is a vast difference between the devil going out of his own house, and his being turned out of Christ's house. "Whose house are we" (Heb. iii. 5). See! The great usurper must be driven out by God the eternal Spirit, and when he is once turned out, he can never take possession again. But when Satan walks out of his own house, he can walk in again in his own time. It is then he takes with him the perfection of devilry, even seven spirits more wicked than himself, and finds his house empty, swept, and garnished. There you have a beautiful picture of an Arminian, fleshly professor. Satan again takes possession of him, and the last state of that *religious man, who gave his heart to the Lord (?)*, who closed in with the offers of mercy (?), who was as proud as the devil could make him because he thought he could help God to save himself, yes, the last state of that man is worse than the first. That is God's Word. The Holy Ghost in the work of regeneration and restoration can never be defeated. He is almighty to regenerate. He is omnipotent to finish the work He once begins. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall put him to flight" (Isa. lix. 19, margin). Now mark! if the power of the Holy Ghost should fail in the work of grace in the heart of a single redeemed sinner, Satan would still have opportunity throughout eternity to reproach the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with lack of foresight, wisdom, and power. But blessed be God, this can never be!

"Eternal, free, electing grace  
Redemption's bound'ry sets;  
And those whom Jesus died to save  
The Spirit ne'er forgets.

We are now brought to consider—

IV.—IS THE FALLING FROM GRACE THEORY CONSISTENT WITH THE APOSTLE PAUL'S EXPERIENCE AND TEACHING?

Here we will notice two views which are taken of the apostle's experience in connection with our text. Some say that he was full of doubts and fears as to his eternal safety, and believed in the possibility of a child of God falling from grace and becoming an eternal castaway. Others say, the apostle never had a doubt or fear from the moment of his regeneration to his death, in reference to his eternal salvation. Well, I do not believe either. I am confident that Paul believed and maintained the impossibility of elect souls perishing, and I am equally confident that he did not live without his doubts and fears. If he did, he was an extraordinary character, altogether different to those whose experiences God has given a place in His blessed Book. I do believe that Paul had his doubts, fears, cares, and anxieties. Look at 1 Cor. ii. 3: "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Now turn to 2 Cor. i. 8, 9: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." But one thing I wish to point out to you is this: in the declaration of the truth of our text Paul had not a doubt or uncertainty in his mind respecting his eternal safety, or that of the Church. Look at the context: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, *not as uncertainly*; so fight I, *not as one that beateth the air*." He was not fighting a phantom or running at random. Uncertainty or doubt in respect to his running and fighting entered not into his reckonings.

Let us look at the general course of the apostle's experience in these matters. In Rom. viii. 33: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Any uncertainty, doubt, or fear here? No! "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now turn to 2 Cor. iv.

17, 18, and v. 1: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know." He does not say, we fancy, or, it is our opinion, but "*We know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Any uncertainty, doubt, or fear here? No! Come along with me to Phil. i. 6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform, or finish, it until the day of Jesus Christ." Turn to 2 Tim. i. 12: "I know"—no hesitancy here. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Come to the last chapter, 16th verse: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Let us hear what Peter says, who was blessedly taught by the same Spirit. Writing to those who were begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, he says: "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." John is perfectly one with Paul and Peter in this matter. He says: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). Jude joins in with his glorious doxology: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Thus we see that Paul, Peter, John, and Jude were all agreed as to the everlasting security of the Church of God in Christ Jesus. They had no fear as to any of the members of the mystical body of Christ ever falling away from Him to perish in the clutches of Satan.

But to the text. Paul says: "But I keep under my body." What does he mean by that? Not the material body. Some of you may be ready to say to me: "You do not look as though you kept under your material body." Neither am I going to after the Popish fashion. I don't belong to that lot. It is a mark of the grand apostasy "to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. iv. 3). The body spoken of here is the old man, the body of sin, the body of death, the body of corruption. You may depend upon it, if the old man,

the flesh, which the apostle here styles "*my body*," is not kept under as a servant, it will prove a very tyrannical master. How did the apostle keep under his old man? He no doubt alluded to the training and exercises of pugilists, wrestlers, and athletes, who took part in the Grecian games. I have witnessed such training, and observed the means used for the reduction of the fleshy, fatty, and superfluous parts of the body, and the development of muscle and strength. By praying, crying, sighing, and communion with his God the apostle mortified the flesh with its affections and lusts. He says, "*I fight*," alluding to pugilistic encounters in which the contenders made each other black and blue. I shall now give what may not appear to some a very elegant illustration, nevertheless it is not mine, nor Paul's, but by the Holy Ghost. The apostle is here represented as giving his old man a black eye, so as to make him not presentable. He knew by painful experience that as a saint his flesh should be kept out of sight from the world, that his *body* could never be acceptable to the Church, and could never have a standing in the presence of a God of infinite purity. Paul, as a spiritual man, hated the flesh, fought with the flesh and loathed its appearance even as a respectable member of society would avoid his appearance in public with a discoloured eye. "And bring it into subjection." It must take the place of a servant. A servant? Yes, a servant to the child of God. Where does the old man serve the new? When he experiences, like Paul, the burden of the body of sin and death. Then it gives him an errand to the mercy-seat with the cry: "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from *this body of death*?" Sin, when it is experienced, gives the living child a message to the throne of grace. Were it not for felt sin, the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, and the seethings of indwelling corruption, where should we be? Seeking our pleasures with the worldling and the giddy professor, and not seeking to breathe our desires into the ears of that God, who, when He hears, comforts and refreshes His mourning ones.

Why did Paul keep under his body, and bring it into subjection? He says: "Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." In the 17th verse he says: "For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel." He preached God's Gospel for the ingathering of God's elect, the bringing of them to the feet of a precious Christ to be washed, clothed, and provided for during their stay down here. But he declared something else besides the Gospel, though he always preached truth. If you will look through this epistle, you will see how earnestly he contended for discipline, order, and decency. He taught how to deal with refractory members. There are many very strange characters in the Church of Christ, who, with all their sins and infirmities, are children of God. Turn with me to the 5th chapter, 3rd

verse: "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath done this deed." The sin of incest. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh." There you see a castaway; but not after the order of that wretched presumptuous man at Rome, who, with bell, book, and candle, and the most horrible curses, consigns to eternal torments all those who differ from him. No, nor after the manner in which some of our Protestant communities deal with their weak and fallen brethren. "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ." Marvellous mercy to be a castaway to such an end. This is simply to be a castaway from Church fellowship and communion, and from open association with the members of the Lord's body. Here we see there was in the Church at Corinth a man who acted diametrically opposite to the revealed will and word of God. He was dealt with according to the directions of the Lord given in Matt. xviii. 15—17: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear thee, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Such an one would be a castaway, cast out, excommunicated, disapproved of men, while at the same time God looks upon him as an eternally loved one, an elect one, a redeemed one, "perfect in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, complete in Him."

Afar off, such outcasts, or castaways shall hear the sound of the Gospel trumpet proclaiming restoration to the outcast, and be brought to the footstool of sovereign mercy to bless and praise the riches of forbearing grace and restoring favour. In 2 Cor. ii. 6—8, we read of the restoration of the Corinthian castaway. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him." Talk about being cast away from JEHOVAH'S love! Never. Here we have a castaway from the Church's embrace, but not from the embrace of his God. The apostle is here speaking of the service and sins of the servant, and not of the standing of the son. He is dwelling upon the walk of the disciple before the Church, and not of the acceptance of the child with the Father, or his rest in the embrace of a loving Redeemer.

May God add His blessing, and give to us light for our understandings, comfort for our hearts, and establishment in the faith, for His own name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## SOUL TROUBLE.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN THE HORNS ASSEMBLY ROOM, ON SUNDAY MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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"Now is My soul troubled : and what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour."—John xii. 27.

THE circumstances surrounding the words I have read for our consideration are full of spiritual instruction, and when opened up by the teaching of God the ever-blessed Spirit to our enlightened understanding, yield much that is blessedly interesting. Encouraging and establishing to those who have been brought by omnipotent and sovereign grace, to see in the Lord Jesus Christ everything that blesses and refreshes them; and out of the Lord Jesus Christ everything that makes for their misery, sorrow, and soul-distress. At the time these words were spoken, our blessed Lord was nearing the close of His earthly pilgrimage, and approaching that dread spot for which He had anxiously and ardently waited with desires and longings, which none of us can truly understand or sufficiently appreciate. As we are taught to apprehend the seeming cross purposes with which the Man of sorrows had to contend, our minds are filled with reverence and godly fear, and we wonder that poor, weak, short-sighted mortals like ourselves can have any understanding in the mysteries of Divine grace, and in those openings of Divine love as revealed in the afflictions of the God-Man, styled in one of the ancient liturgies, "Thine unknown sufferings."

It is a mercy to be privileged to meditate upon these things while the religious world is endeavouring to paint, picture, and represent to the natural mind that which can never be represented. Some are fond of displaying the form of a cross and styling it the emblem of redemption. Ah, my dear friends, it is the emblem of the curse—a sign of reprobation, and not of God's election. Others bring before our natural eyes a crucifix



representing a human being in all the agonies and pangs of dissolution; but this can only affect the natural senses and work upon the natural emotions. We may come a little closer home and question ourselves in this matter. We may contemplate the physical and mental sufferings of our blessed Lord as they are described with unerring accuracy in the words of this blessed Book; we may see Him hated and persecuted by the world and rejected by His own; we may see Him scourged, nailed, and pierced; but all these sink into nothingness before the revelation of those unparalleled sufferings which He experienced during His bloody sweat in Gethsemane and His dreary desertion upon Calvary, which found vent in those doleful words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It is well for our minds to be exercised in the physical and mental sufferings of our blessed Lord and Master; but we must ever remember, that without an experimental and spiritual oneness with Him therein and the fellowship of His sufferings, all our knowledge will be but superficial and destitute of that soul prosperity which we hold as precious as life itself.

It is our lot this morning, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of the eternal Spirit, to look at this precious portion, and may He so teach us to profit in our own heart's experience and for those with whom we may be brought in spiritual association. Many portions of the written Word reveal to us the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, especially in those prophetic Psalms left on record by David and others through the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ who was in them. Those precious Psalms, such as the xviii., and xxii., and lxix., breathe out the soul's sorrow and spiritual sufferings experienced by the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," during His sojourn here upon earth. In looking at these with a spiritually enlightened understanding, we rejoice in the blessed fact that every revelation of God's Christ given to us in the Scriptures of truth is, the Head in union with the members, and the members in union with the Head. One has very well said, and I think it could not have been said better, "I know of no Christ apart from the Church, and I know of no Church apart from Christ." Speak of the one without the other and you speak of that which has no existence in the mind and will of the Father, in the pages of the written Word, or in the spiritual understanding of those whom He has brought into living union with Himself. What is God's Christ? It is His Anointed. The anointed Head in union eternal and indissoluble with all those whom the Father gave to Him before the worlds were framed. Look at the declaration of this spiritual union which the Saviour made in the ears of His Father as recorded throughout John xvii. Does He speak of Himself? It is in union with His people. Does He speak of His work? It is on their behalf. Does He speak of the words given to Him? They

are words of life, comfort, and consolation for them. Does He speak of His sufferings? They are the sufferings He endured for them. And mark you, we as members of His body, His flesh, and His bones, are brought to know our painful and pleasurable interest therein; "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor. i. 5). What are the sufferings of Christ to me if I am not conscious of a spiritual apprehension of these sufferings for me and in me? What will it avail me of Christ suffering for me on Calvary if I have no experimental realisation of my oneness with Him in His sufferings? Tell me, ye who may be martyrs to that painful effect of sin, the headache, is your whole body in a comfortable state while enduring such a malady? You can testify full well that when your head is splitting with its nervous aches, the whole body is out of sorts. Let me ask you who are blessed with the grace which God has given you and the honesty of purpose which He has bestowed upon you, to look Him in the face, and say, what are your wishes under such painful experiences as these. Do you not wish to be gone, according to the longings expressed in the words of the Psalmist: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove: for then would I fly away, and be at rest" (Psalm lv. 6). Is there not the anxious feeling which you fear to express to any mortal, that you would rather die than live? Ah, you long to be divested of the burden of the flesh and enter with joy into His unveiled presence, into that blessed land where there is "neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," where cares, despondencies, sighs, and groans are for ever hushed in that sweet repose experienced by the redeemed and glorified ones in the presence of God and the Lamb. Well, it is a mercy, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and the guidance of a Father's hand amid the varied phases of an all-wise but perplexing providence, to enjoy, if it be only for a moment, the sweet companionship of the Brother born for adversity. His sweet love visits and gracious communications are few and far between to many of the tried and tempted children of God; but they are worth waiting for, and when they are enjoyed, the child of God can thank Him for all the bitters He has mingled with his sweets, for the cloud which has carried His message of love, and for the crook He has appointed in the lot. It has been my delight for a long time to rummage through my Bible and search with intensity of spirit for that which ofttimes I find not; for I can only find what He intends for me, as He is graciously pleased to put it in my way. I seek for the presence of the consolation of Israel; but I cannot find at will either comfort, consolation, revelation, or manifestation. Some of you, perhaps, may be clever enough for all this; but, depend upon it, I do not sit on the same form with you in school. My prayer is to be led and guided in His own way—the old-fashioned way in which weary pilgrims and

outcast strangers are led to their rest up yonder. Yes, I love to be found in that path described in Psalm cvii. 7, as "the right way," although it may be very rugged and rough, and frequently "a solitary way," long distances of which must be trodden without the company of a single pilgrim. Yet, mark you, it is the right way, and the spot He has designed for me upon earth is right, according to that glorious declaration in Hosea xiv. 9: "The ways of the LORD are right and the just shall walk therein." O my poor, lonely, tried, and tempted pilgrim brother or sister, the morning may be breaking upon thee with many clouds—clouds of doubt, of fear, of care and anxiety as to thy place or position in the wilderness; yet, as assuredly as He has given thee a little faith in Himself, a little hope in His mercy, a little trust in His goodness, and a little confidence in His covenant, His bow shall be seen in the cloud, the silver lining shall appear, and the glory of His grace and salvation shall rise upon thee.

But here we have to do with a suffering Christ and a suffering people—a suffering Head with His suffering members. From Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross our great and glorious Head was a suffering Stranger.

"A Pilgrim through this lonely world,  
The blessed Jesus pass'd;  
A Mourner all His life was He,  
A dying Lamb at last."

Sufferings were His from His mother's womb to the very last sigh that escaped His sorrowing spirit. In looking through the pages of God's most Holy Word, it is encouraging to find that all those in experimental oneness with Him were brought through the very same spots of anxiety, care, and perplexity, and were the subjects of much soul-trouble with darkness and gloom, like as we are. The truly-taught child of God would not be without them if he could, for when His rich, magnanimous, and sovereign grace is enjoyed, the child will thank Him for troubles, temptations, and tribulations, knowing that these have been only so many calls upon His Fatherly notice and His care. Let us now look at a few portions of His blessed Word in connection with this precious subject. In 1 Cor. xii. 26, 27: "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Such is the perfect union existing between the varied members of the one body that what one member suffers affects the whole, and draws forth the loving sympathy of the Head in glory to the suffering one. Look again at Acts xiv. 22: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." This is God's testimony in connection with confirmation. Confirmation? Yes. This is

our confirmation when the Shepherd and Bishop of souls lays His hand upon the little ones of His scattered flock who are gathered together in His name. This is the confirmation of souls which those sorely need who are battered and shattered by Satan, and who, from the temptations and tribulations of the wilderness, from the experience of their own heart's depravity and the incorrigibility of their nature, are oftentimes wavering in their judgment, and wandering in their dispositions. These will run hither and thither seeking for guidance and grace according to Amos viii. 11, 12: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the North even to the East, they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the LORD, and shall not find it." Some of you may say such a famine does not exist in these days, but let me tell you, if you are rightly taught, you will know what it is to experience a famine in your own souls, though you may be privileged to sit under the preached Word stately. It is one thing to hear with the outward ear, another thing altogether to receive the engrafted Word. Now, those who waver and wander, who are shaken like so many broken reeds, but, blessed be God, not bruised reeds to be destroyed, but to be supported, strengthened, and confirmed in the gracious testimony of JEHOVAH concerning them, and glory in the fact that through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom. Then listen to the sound of heaven's own music as it is wafted to us across the border lands of eternity. Turn to Rev. vii. 13, 14: "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence come they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, *These are they which come out of great tribulation*, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Mark you, when this exercised heart is crushed and broken with a sense of my sinfulness and corruption, and bubbling up of the realisation of the tender mercy and patient grace of my God to me, I long to be gone, to bow before His throne, divested of the burden of the flesh, and all sin, all lust, all corruption, and all blasphemous thoughts gone for ever. But surely, say some of you in astonishment, you are not such a character as that! Ah! my dear friends, I am not going to tell you all about what sort of a creature I am, having something better to talk about. I have just given you a hint that you may know where and what I am in respect to the beaten track of tribulation, and the temptations and trials peculiar to the suffering members of the

one body in blessed and hallowed communion with their once-suffering Head.

Now turn with me to 2 Cor. i. 5: "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Mark you! It is not as my sufferings for Christ abound in me. It is not that. The Arminian would have it so, and the poor deluded Papist would say the same. Yes, he lacerates his flesh, reduces his natural body by fasting, and calls that suffering for Christ, which is pure delusion. But the Holy Ghost by Paul leads us into a marvellous secret here. He speaks not of sufferings *for* Christ, but of the sufferings *of* Christ abounding in us realised in blessed and hallowed sympathy with Him and He with us. You see the same in that, to many, mysterious portion, very frequently misquoted and perverted—Col. i. 24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you." Paul, as a God-made and God-sent minister knew that all the sufferings he endured were for the benefit, encouragement, comfort, and consolation of the members of the one body to whom he ministered. It is mine to know, that as a pastor of a people whom God has separated to Himself, as a minister of the New Testament, whom He has taught and sent with His message to His people, if I am to be of any real service to them, the devil will assault me, the world will annoy me, and my wretched nature will aggravate me. If it is not so, I shall be of very little use to the poor and afflicted in Zion. If I do not know the spirit of what my blessed Lord and Master spake to His disciples, "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 19), I shall not minister to the necessities of those whom He has separated from the world. The flesh must be a burden to me if I am to be a blessing to those who are

"Sick of self and fond of Him."

Here I am about to use a Scriptural expression which may shock the very nice and precise among you. In Rev. iii. 16 God speaks of spewing out of His mouth certain persons who were neither cold nor hot. Do you know what it is to spew yourself out of your own mouth? according to that (in Ezek. xxxvi. 31) which I have frequently quoted to you of late: "Then shall ye loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." I do not talk like this for talking's sake, or that I may appear to be something before you, but because it is the very experience of my heart in the presence of Him with whom we have to do, and because I know it is the experience of those whom He has taught to judge themselves in the light of His glorious perfections, who mourn over the deceitfulness and plague of their own hearts, and who feel week by week, and day by day, that in them—that is, in their flesh—dwelleth no good thing. See! "Who

*now rejoice in my sufferings for you.*" I do not know of anything so heart-melting, yet so spirit-encouraging, as when I have been battered and shattered by the devil and driven to my wits' end, I have been brought, in the providence of God, face to face with one, the features of whose spiritual countenance have agreed with mine, and there before the throne, at the feet of a suffering Saviour, to bow with him, not like the hypocrite with pretentious genuflections, but as Israelites indeed, who bow in spirit and true adoration in the presence of the King, who blesses all such with His sweet sympathy and gracious encouragement. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." Papists and Ritualists would pause at the end of the word "Christ"—thus, "and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." Oh! say they, this is proof positive that something is required from us to make the sufferings of Christ efficacious; the faithful must go through a course of religious discipline here, or through purgatorial cleansings hereafter. This is a villainous perversion of Paul's words. Look at them! He speaks of "the afflictions of Christ *in my flesh*," not on the cross. These afflictions are so many blessed evidences of my union to Him, who, by His sufferings, His agony, His bloody sweat and cruel death, eternally redeemed from hell, from the curse of the law, from sin, from self, from the world, and from deceit and violence, all the election of grace in union with Him. "*For His body's sake, which is the Church.*" It is a glorious and spiritual advantage to the child of God when He knows that every pain, perplexity, or anxiety he experiences, is a member of Christ's body, flesh, and bones, and for the comfort and consolation of those with whom he is brought into communion and fellowship.

Now, it is ours to look at these precious words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ to His Father, and in the hearing of His disciples: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." I have told you that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered physically, mentally, and spiritually. In His body, in His soul, and in His spirit. His body was lashed and lacerated. His soul was surcharged with sorrow. His spirit was overwhelmed within Him. The load of His people's sins, the burden of their griefs and sorrows, with the hidings of His Father's face, were terrible realities to Him. Read at your leisure Psalms xxii. and lxi., in which you see described the breathing out of His sorrowing soul into the ears of His Father. In this we hear the language of the Head for the members, ay, and the language of the members in experimental oneness with the Head. In the latter Psalm He cries, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing." This is the Man of sorrows and acquainted with

grief of whom Isaiah said: "He was taken from prison and from judgment," or, as it reads in the margin: "*He was taken away by distress and judgment*" (Isaiah liii. 8). Can this be true? Indeed and in truth it is. Why was He in distress? Why was His soul troubled? Because He sank in spirit in the midst of all the mire of corruption, depravity, filth, iniquity, which His people inherited from their first parents' transgression in Eden. Yes, and He sank in the midst of all the sickness, infirmities, ailments, headaches, heartaches, griefs, and anxieties which His poor people suffer here below. Just think of this! The Lord Jesus Christ coming into contact with sin, not one sin, but the accumulation of all the sins of all those whom He represented in covenant before the worlds were framed. It is my mercy to see that He who is my Lord and Master, He who is my Saviour and sympathising Friend, came down to the depths of my sorrows, and in the school of human suffering learned how to come feelingly to the very spots of my soul trouble. Did you notice the identity existing between the first sentence of the text and the opening of His consolations to His disciples in John xiv. 1, when Judas the devil had gone out? "Let not your heart be troubled." This is a gracious covenant command from that blessed One who obeyed every one of His Father's commands for you and for me. Is your heart troubled? From whence does your trouble spring? You may point to the world with its changes, to your trying circumstances, to your wretched surroundings, to your painful bereavements, to your losses in trade, and to the difficulty you have to be honest and make ends meet and tie. Well, these are hard things for a child of God to grapple with, but they are not the cause of spiritual heart trouble. What is? Sin, that accursed hell-dog!—crushing me down to the dust, and experiencing no sense of a dear Redeemer's pardoning love; but He who was troubled with the weight of His people's sins and infirmities, sends forth His covenant command: "Let not your heart be troubled," and peace, quietness, and assurance possess the heart of the troubled one. Sin is my daily trouble; I hate and loathe it. The experience of it gives me errand after errand to the footstool of sovereign mercy, and causes many a heart-melting before Him, and true spiritual compassion for those who are of the same passions with me, subject to the same infirmities, liable to the same weaknesses, troubled with the same distresses, and harassed with the same temptations.

"*Now is My soul troubled.*" One prolific source of the Saviour's soul trouble was Satan's temptations. See! "The prince of this world cometh" (John xiv. 30). When did he come? Throughout the life of the Man of sorrows. He came in the person of the bloodthirsty Herod, but was disappointed and defeated. He came again in the person of Judas with seeming success, but was destroyed in all his designs against the Christ

of God. Yes, he seemed to succeed when Jesus died, for in that death was buried all the hopes of those who were one with Him then. "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21). It is when all hope is gone, when all strength is gone, when the death of every earthly thing we hold good takes place, that God reveals Himself in His true character, as the God of resurrection. Ofttimes we tarry and linger on the judgment side of the cross of Christ, but when He appears, we are graciously led to the resurrection side, where He ever lives, and life and immortality are brought to light by His Gospel. We shall never be able to get to the depth of the meaning of that word, *troubled*. There is a fulness in it which we cannot see in the mere word. It has reference to a ship in distress where many seas meet and contrary winds are raging. The ship moves, but is only to be driven back with winds and waves of redoubled violence; according to *Psa. cvii. 26, 27*: "They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of *trouble*. Thy reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end." (*Margin: all the wisdom is swallowed up.*) It may have reference to a novice wholly at the mercy of a trained and scientific pugilist, and knocked hither and thither until his thoughts are reduced to sheer consternation. Where is he? He knows not. So our Lord Jesus Christ at this dread moment felt the Father, the world, and all hell moving against Him. His Father's justice was moved against Him because of the sins He bore. The world because of its hatred to Him. Satan because of his envy and malignity against Him. All these pitted against the Lord of life and glory. See! He who is thy Surety and mine, thy Saviour and mine, came into the very spot where we deserve to be eternally, oppressed by the devil; where we deserve to be unceasingly, hated by the world. If He had not loved us, where should we have been? But He does love us, and for us He was troubled at the very thought of contact with our enemies, sin and Satan; troubled with the prospect of the hidings of the Father's face.

"*And what shall I say?*" There is something marvellous in this declaration. No wonder that a poor stammering wretch like me should be sometimes in soul agony and bitter exercise before my God with the felt inability to order my cause before Him, or to find words to express the sorrows of my soul. Nay, when I stand in His name before my fellow-sinners, to whom I would speak words of comfort and consolation, the Lord sometimes puts a stone upon the well's mouth, and if He takes the stone away, the well is deep and I have nothing to draw with, I may well cry out, in the words of my suffering Master, "What shall I say?" The Lord Jesus Christ—in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who could say to His Father, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest



Me"—who knew all men, all that was in them, all their concerns, circumstances, sorrows, and perplexities—when He came into contact with judgment and condemnation on the behalf of His people He was troubled as to what He should say. Look at that description given of Him in Mark xiv. 33: "And He taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy." My dear friends, we shall only be able fully to understand this when in the heights of glory we gaze on—

"Those dear tokens of His passion  
Which His dazzling body bears,  
Cause of endless exultation  
To His ransomed worshippers:  
With what rapture  
Gaze they on those glorious scars."

It will only be when, without a cloud between, we shall gaze upon the slain Lamb in the midst of throne, that we shall have opened up to our ravished ears, and revealed to our adoring hearts, sufferings unknown to us before, sufferings from God and from devils, from friends and from foes, and all for us.

"*And what shall I say?*" Why should our Lord Jesus Christ be brought to such a spot as this? That He might be a Saviour just suited to you and to me. That He might be able to sympathise with us when we are led into like spots: "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 18). This is a marvellous mystery. I wish I could understand it more fully. I sigh for a deeper knowledge and more precious insight into it; but I must wait the time of the Father's revealings. Here the Lord Jesus Christ comes down to the spot felt by some of us this morning. We know not how to order our cause before Him; but we know what it is to sigh and cry, to breathe and groan, and, blessed be His holy name, He has promised not to pass by these. Turn to Isa. xxxviii. 14, 15, where you will find Hezekiah in the very same spot using the very same words: "O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me. What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it." Is sin for ever put away? Himself hath done it. Do the sufferings of Christ abound in us? Himself hath done it. Are we groaning under the burden of the flesh? Himself hath done it. Are we mourning on account of the seethings of indwelling corruption? Himself hath done it. Do we desire to live and reign with Him? Himself hath done it. "*And what shall I say?*" cried the Head. "*And what shall I say?*" is the cry of the living members. The necessities of the members were experienced by the Head. The fulness of the Head is enjoyed by the members.

"*Father, save Me from this hour.*" Have you been brought to an hour of soul trouble when no cry has escaped you but, "Save me from this hour? Save me from this bitterness, from

this tribulation, from this bereavement, from this wretched discontent?" At such times we little think that we are praying to God for deliverance from that which He has appointed for us, and to which He has appointed us (1 Thess. iii. 3). However perplexing the crosses and crooks of my pathway may be, the paradoxes of Divine experience can only be explained to me by Him who sent them. Through the hour of darkness, desertion, and death Jesus must go, though the sorrows of His heart wrung from Him the bitter cry, "*Father, save Me from this hour.*" How would He be saved from it? Listen to His own words in gloomy, dark Gethsemane: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38). Death preferable to the gloomy horrors He must experience previous to His death upon Calvary. Know ye aught of this? Have you been brought into such spots of fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, after a participation with Him in the glory of His Father's rich, sovereign, free, and uninfluenced grace (no other grace will do for me), you have been left to the buffetings of the devil, the hidings of the Father's face, darkness, despondency, and self-despair, that you see no deliverance but from the hands of a covenant God? I know all that in the bitterness of my own heart, and in the sorrows of my soul before Him. Just think that such a worm of the earth should dare to stand before a people tried and tempted, exercised and taught by Him to speak of these things which I know but oftentimes feel not, and experiencing the cruel suggestion of Satan: "If thou be a son of God, why shouldest thou be left in gloom and distraction?" This accursed "*if*" is often thundered down to the depths of my spiritual necessity, causing my soul to tremble. Can it be possible that such was the experience of our Lord Jesus Christ? We will throw the idea of possibility to the winds. It is more than possible, it is a fact recorded for the comfort and encouragement of those who experience their oneness with Him. Look at Jonah when his God-prepared gourd was destroyed by the God-prepared worm. All my comforts come at God's command, and the cares which eat them all away appear at His bidding. When these distress me, let me ask you, What must be the feelings of my heart as I am thus left to myself? Like those of Jonah when "he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live." Ay, and like those of Elijah when he sat down under the juniper tree, and requested for himself that he might die; and said: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life" (1 Kings xix. 4). Nay, look still further, and I know some will not like this, but what is that to me? It is mine to declare God's testimony as He has given it to me. Read Heb. xi. 13: "These all died in faith," or, *according to faith*. This was the faith of God's elect, the faith that overcame the world. See! The world appeared in those wretched Philistines who hounded Samson to the very death.

Samson the strong was a glorious type of Jesus the stronger. In the bitterness of his soul he cried: "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes" (Judges xvi. 28—30). God strengthened him, and with the strength he pulled the house down upon himself and upon the wretched Philistines. Samson slept in the burying-place of Manoah his father, while, from the very spot where his soul was exceeding sorrowful even to die, and where he wreaked vengeance upon his enemies, he was safely conducted by a precious Christ to the heights of glory, to rejoice in the presence of his God, and bask in the sunshine of everlasting felicity. He died in faith. Ah, but see, it is recorded in this precious chapter, "*These all died in faith.*" Our old friend Rahab was among them. People may say what they like to pollute her fair fame with their pious babble, but yonder she stands in the faith and beauty of Him who said to the Father for her, and for Samson too: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." Mark those last words:

"*For this cause came I unto this hour.*" This is a glorious declaration, one breathing submission and resignation to His Father's will. Blessed and most precious it is when in the most trying dispensations, when, in the midst of the most perplexing and bewildering providences, I can trace my Father's hand of power, and feel His heart of love, knowing that all things work together for good to me, a poor vile sinner, that does love Him, and oftentimes weeps and mourns because I cannot love Him more.

May He add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

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## RIGHT WAYS.

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### A Sermon

PREACHED IN THE HORNS ASSEMBLY ROOM, KENNINGTON, ON SUNDAY  
MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein."—Hosea xiv. 9.

IN the minds of many of the living children of God, much ignorance abounds in reference to the meaning of many of the prophecies, especially those contained in what are styled, "The Minor Prophets." These are often read, but to little purpose. The reason of this is because of the veil of ignorance upon the heart. A man may possess a marvellous intellect, and capacious reasoning powers; be able to understand natural things to perfection, have a wide grasp of God's plan of salvation, and be able to trace out accurately the doctrines of predestination, election, redemption, regeneration, preservation, and glorification, but when he looks at the dark portions of the prophecies, he is all at sea. Man is so prone to put carnal constructions on those metaphors, illustrations, and prophecies given by God in His blessed Word for the spiritual guidance of a spiritual people. If, when reading this precious prophecy of Hosea, we see not God's dealings in grace with His own children in Christ Jesus, and look solely to God's ancient people, the Jews, we are lost in a fog, apprehending not the Divine mind, nor enjoying our part contained in the varied terms He employs throughout the whole of the Book. But the moment He takes away the veil from our heart, and brings us to know and confess that precious truth contained in Psalm xxxvi. 9—"For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we shall see light"—the moment God's light is thrown upon that which is dark—the moment the light of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ shines in the heart of the redeemed one, there is a right apprehension of God's mind contained therein. This prophecy

was given for the purpose of unfolding the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in His people—the riches of the glory of His grace in the selection, separation, and salvation of His people in Christ Jesus. Now, without this, I may as well be honest and tell you that I do not understand the prophecy of Hosea. But when I am taught to read it in the light of God's dealings with His people during their sojourn in the wilderness, bringing them to enjoy His paternal love, His preserving care, and His protecting mercy, in the face of all their sins, idolatries, adulteries, waverings, and waunderings from Him, then I see in a moment that He is the God that will do for me, and I am just the sinner in whom His grace can be magnified. This is the Gospel my heart loves, and which causes me to long for the time when I shall have done with sin, corruption, and death, enter into His glory, and never more go out. It is our happy privilege now to look at the portion which I have read for our consideration, and may we be blest with the guidance and grace of God the Holy Ghost as we notice,—

I.—THE CHARACTERS NAMED—"The wise, the prudent, and the just."

II.—THEIR EXPERIENCE—"Who is wise, and *he shall understand these things?* prudent, and *he shall know them?*"

III.—RIGHTEOUSNESS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THEM—"For the ways of the LORD are right."

IV.—THE LOT OF THE JUST AND OF TRANSGRESSORS—"And the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein."

I.—THE CHARACTERS NAMED—"The wise, the prudent." In reading God's Word in the letter of it, we oftentimes come across what appears to the natural understanding flat contradictions, flagrant discrepancies, and statements totally opposed to each other. For instance, the text leads our minds to the contemplation of certain persons who are wise and prudent, yet blessed with spiritual knowledge and understanding in the ways of the Lord. If you will turn to Matthew xi. 25, you will see that the declaration of the Great Expounder of Holy Writ, the Glorious Expositor of God's mind and will, is the very opposite to that of our text: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*" This declaration leads the mind to certain who are not *wise and prudent* yet are blessed with gracious revelations of the Father's mind and will, while Hosea notices those *who are wise and prudent* and have a spiritual knowledge and right understanding in the ways of the Lord. Now look at the mind of Christ as revealed in Luke x. 21: "In that hour *Jesus rejoiced in spirit*, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto

babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Why should He rejoice under such circumstances? He rejoiced to see the accomplishment of His Father's will, and the fulfilment of all that JEHOVAH had declared in His eternal counsels. Judgment was visited upon all out of Himself, and mercy revealed to all in Himself. He rejoiced because the Father in His own absolute right had hidden the blessings of the covenant from reprobate dogs, and had shown them to elect sheep, because He hid them from the great ones in their own esteem and revealed them to the little ones of His family. Then we see the spirit of satisfaction with which He admires the unerring judgment of His Father: "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

Let us notice the question, "Who is wise?" When we look at men universally, and judge of them according to our own heart's experience, knowing well what we were in the days of our unregeneracy, we despair in our hope of finding a wise man. Look at Eph. ii. 2, 3: "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Not the objects of God's wrath, but wrathful children. Wrath and enmity against God, characterising every thought, look, word, and action of the old nature. It matters not how good, how excellent, religious, *pious*, or devout a person may be, independent of union to the Lord Jesus Christ and the gracious anointings of God the ever-blessed Spirit, all his pretensions are but vanity, foolishness, and enmity against God. "Who is wise?" Where, among the sons and daughters of Adam, is such an one to be found? We will ask one to describe his state and condition previous to the Lord's gracious work in him. By the Holy Ghost he says, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus iii. 3). Foolishness characterises every thought and act of our existence until we are taken in hand by that blessed and adorable One whom Paul describes as "Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). Look again at that confession going forth in prayer and supplication from the exercised heart of the Psalmist! In Psalm lxix. 5 he says, "O God, Thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from Thee." What foolishness can be so great as that which sets itself against the wisdom of JEHOVAH as revealed in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ? What foolishness can be so glaring as that which would bring down the infinite JEHOVAH, the eternal God, the sovereign Lord of all, to the bar of man's puny judgment? What foolishness can be

so flagrant as that which would drag the great and glorious JEHOVAH from His throne and attempt to usurp His prerogatives? Yet, on the right hand and on the left, we see poor, proud man raising His voice against the God of heaven and earth. Professors of religion are besotted with the delusion that the plan, performance, and perfection of the salvation of their souls are wholly in their own power. What folly can equal this? But look here: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child" (Prov. xxii. 15). All that is required for the display of this foolishness is time and opportunity. Foolishness appears in every thought, look, word, and act of the natural man. Who, then, are the wise and the prudent? According to nature's judgment we are driven to the conclusion that all are endowed with a certain amount of wisdom and prudence. But I find, in the course of my observation and experience, that there is precious little of either real wisdom or prudence in the world. Men, in their ordinary dealings with each other, lack prudence. Men, in communicating their thoughts and in expounding their views, lack prudence. Nay, even godly men and godly women, whom a gracious and long-suffering God is training for glory, are frequently found lacking, and mourning over their lack of, prudence. These are often wanting in foresight in reference to the doing of the work God has arranged for them in His all-wise providence. Often are they found trying to do the Lord's work in a fleshly spirit. But the prudent are those in whose hearts God has implanted His fear, and who dread to sin against Him. But, my dear friends, we must proceed further in seeking out all the truth God has to communicate in connection with a subject so precious, instructive, and profitable. The wise and prudent are also represented as

"*The just.*" Where are the just to be found? God declares that "all have sinned and come short of *His* glory" (Rom. iii. 23). All mankind in Adam sinned, rebelled, and proclaimed against JEHOVAH'S righteous rule, holy law, and sovereign sway. Thus man universally became unrighteous and unjust. A few portions of God's most Holy Word settles this matter. "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psa. xiv. 2, 3; liii. 2, 3). Now look at Paul's quotation of these two Psalms as given in Romans iii. 10: "There is none righteous, no, not one." Here we see in a moment the judgment of the Holy Ghost concerning the unrighteousness of the whole human family. Not a just man to be found upon earth. Ah! but we go still further than this. Solomon, in Eccles. vii. 20, says: "For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." The word *just* may be rendered *justified*, and this read: "There is not a justified man upon earth that doeth

good and sinneth not." This does not question the existence of justified men, who are accounted just or righteous before God; but reveals a fact so pungent in the experience of God's living children, that, a justified man through the blood and obedience of Jesus, who does good and sins not, cannot be found upon earth. Not one. All mankind, elect and reprobate, redeemed and unredeemed, regenerate and unregenerate, in themselves are always sinners and ever sinning. The spiritually taught children of God know full well that until the last sigh is heaved from their throbbing bosoms every one of them can do nothing but sin, and their confession before the presence of infinite excellency is, that they never did a good work during the whole of their lives. Then we may well ask the questions, Who is wise? Who is prudent? Who is just? The answer is, That man, that woman, that child found in living union with Him who is styled pre-eminently: "The Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24); "My Servant shall deal prudently" (Isa. lii. 13); "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. xxiii. 6). Christ is the Just One in the presence of the Father, for all those who know and feel that in themselves they have neither wisdom, prudence, nor righteousness. *The wise* are those who are made wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. iii. 15). *The prudent* are those who are blessed with the spirit of power and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. i. 7). *The just* are those who are accounted so in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 19). The great and glorious God whom we worship and adore will not be limited in His gracious operations by what we can see and judge. He works where He will, when He will, how He will, upon whom He will, and just because He will. He thus stains the pride of lordly intellect, and brings aspiring reason to His footstool, while the faith of His own giving bows with reverence and awe before His sacred Majesty, thanking Him for the revelation He has given, and begging of Him still further to reveal Himself in love—What I know not, teach thou me. Who then are the wise? Those whom JEHOVAH has graciously taken in hand and brought to know their standing in Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii. 3). As assuredly as we are in Him these treasures of wisdom and knowledge are ours, to be communicated in God's own time. See how clearly Paul, by the Holy Ghost, declares this precious truth in 1 Cor. i. 20—31: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign (that is, Ritualism), and the Greeks seek after wisdom (that is, Rationalism). But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews



a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God." So then, if I am wise, my wisdom, like Samson's strength, lies in my Head. Solomon has this remarkable saying: "The wise man's eyes are in his head" (Eccles. ii. 14). Where else on earth would you have them? I, for one, answer, Nowhere else, Lord, but in Thee, my living Head. I do not want them in this poor, frail, perishing body, but in Him who is the Head of all influence, motive, and power to His body, the Church. His eyes are ever beholding, watching, and concerned for every member of His living family.

*Who is wise?* He is a wise man who is brought by Divine grace and power to the footstool of sovereign mercy, renouncing everything of his own—his own righteousness—his own confidence—his own strength—his own wisdom. Self in every phase and feature renounced, excluded, put out of doors, and God in Christ All in all. Christ my Wisdom, for I am a fool. Christ my Righteousness, for I am a black transgressor. Christ my Sanctification, for I am a polluted worm. Christ my Redemption, for I naturally hug the chains of sin and Satan. Christ my Glory, for all I have apart from Him is degradation and shame. In Christ I am wise. In Christ I am prudent. In Christ I am just. A just man in Christ stands before his God as though sin never had any power over him, as though he had never sinned, yes, he stands before his God in possession of a nature as pure as Christ's is pure, as holy as Christ's is holy, as perfect as Christ's is perfect, as impeccable as Christ's is impeccable. This nature is communicated by a sheer act of sovereign grace, and revealed in regeneration. The partaker of the Divine nature (2 Peter i. 4) may sin awfully like an infuriated devil, as Saul of Tarsus who compelled the saints to blaspheme, or, may sin in the presence of incarnate love, meekness, and compassion, as Peter did, denying his Lord and Master with oaths and curses, but the new nature cannot be touched, polluted, or marred. God looks on him, Christ looks on him, the Holy Ghost looks on him, and deals with him according to that virgin purity and glorious perfection in which he stood with Christ before the worlds were framed. The wise man in Christ is he who cannot and will not believe, hope, repent, or pray, without the presence and power of the responsible One, who does all these for him and in him. The prudent man is he who has been taught through many a painful process and in many perplexing paths, that a sovereign God can manage His work perfectly without his interference. But, how often we think we can improve our state here upon earth! We try to feather our nest. We endeavour to make our home cozy and comfortable. We struggle to master our natural dispositions and triumph over our imperious wills. We are determined to live in peace and quietness with those surrounding us. But as assuredly as I

attempt these things, God will create a waster to destroy. Either the devil, my own evil nature or my fleshly surroundings will be sure to bring about a breach in my good behaviour, and prove to me that I am not the nice young Thomas I imagined myself to be, and that I am not so humble, gentle, loving, and kind, as I fain would be. This has been the experience of all the saints, from Abel's days until now. The *just* man is he who knows feelingly that in him dwelleth no good thing, and that though to will is present with him, yet how to perform that which is good he finds not; but while this is his painful experience a covenant God communicates to him the glorious truth that there is One of His own appointing who is responsible for his wisdom, responsible for his prudence, responsible for his righteousness, responsible for his perfection, responsible for his safe conduct to glory, and that, a precious Christ. The wise are wise in Christ. The prudent are prudent in Christ. The just are just in Christ. We now notice—

II.—THEIR EXPERIENCE—"Who is wise, and *he shall understand these things?* prudent, and *he shall know them?*" I love that view of spiritual matters which leads us into the contemplation of those two lines of Hart:

"True religion's more than notion,  
Something must be known and felt."

Mark! He does not say, Something must be felt, merely, for knowledge accompanies feeling. "*Something must be known,*" and that something must be Divinely communicated and brought home to the heart by the power of God the ever-blessed Spirit. Many portions I could quote bearing upon this. David says: "And *they that know Thy name* will put their trust in Thee" (Psa. ix. 10). Job declared: "*I know* that I shall be justified" (Job. xiii. 18). Was not Job justified at this time? Certainly he was, and that by his God; but accusation after accusation was brought against him by men and devils. Yet he was conscious that the time would come when God would bring him to the light and justify him before his fellows. He also said: "*I know* that my Redeemer" (my Kinsman, my Vindicator, my Avenger) "*liveth*" (Job xix. 25). After personal communication with JEHOVAH in the whirlwind, he could say to Him: "*I know* that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought of Thine can be hindered" (Job xlii. 2). I love such testimonies as this. Again, we have Divinely-imparted knowledge set before us throughout the New Testament Scriptures. See 1 John v. 20: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, *that we may know Him that is true*, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Mark you this; we may be in possession of Scriptural knowledge, and possess a spiritual understanding, but without the light of God thrown

upon it, all is dark as midnight. Look at Eph. i. 18: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, *that ye may know what is the hope of His calling.*" Suppose you were in this place last night with all the gas turned off, what could you see? Nothing. All would be darkness and confusion. So it is with a child of God in possession of a spiritual understanding, without God's light he knows nothing, sees nothing, apprehends nothing, yet with David he can say: "In Thy light we shall see light" (Psa. xxxvi. 9).

But we have more of this revealed in Luke xxiv. 44, 45. The Lord Jesus Christ led the minds of His disciples to the all things written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Him; but that was not sufficient. He brought them to another stage in Divine knowledge, for we are told: "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Now, in possession of a God-given understanding (1 John v. 20), of a God-enlightened understanding (Eph. i. 18), of an opened understanding (Luke xxiv. 45), if the Holy Ghost takes not of the things of Christ to show them unto us, what do we know or feel to edification? Nothing whatever. We may have a knowledge that puffeth up, but we shall be destitute of the love that buildeth up. It is only as the Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shows us the mystery of His incarnation, opens up to our adoring gaze His life of sorrow and suffering upon earth, His bloody sweat in Gethsemane, His darkness and desertion upon Calvary, bearing our transgressions, sins, and iniquities into the land of never-ending forgetfulness, casting them into the sea of eternal oblivion, triumphing over death, hell, and the grave, and entering into heaven's highest glory to appear in the presence of God for us, I say it is only then that we can understand God in His word, in His providence, and in our heart's experience. He who knows and understands these things by the teaching and guidance of the Holy Ghost can never get rid of them. "Ah," say some of you, "we think we have heard you say that the mind of the child of God is oftentimes like a sieve, not able to retain that which is poured into it." Quite right, my friends, quite right. We may listen to God's truth this morning, and before night comes all may be forgotten. We may read God's Book, and never more think of what we have read; but if the Book by the Holy Ghost reads us, and if He communicates to us His bounties, blessings, and benefits, we may forget them, but He will take good care to refresh our treacherous memories again and again. In our forgetfulness, we see the necessity for the office of the covenant Remembrancer to bring to our remembrance whatsoever things Christ may have spoken to us.

Here we are brought to a marvellous view of Divine grace as set before us in this precious allegory of Hosea. "*These things!*" The whole book describes the gracious dealings of a

covenant God with a covenant people. It opens up the wonderful longsuffering and patience of Israel's God, and the incorrigibility of God's Israel. Are there any such characters here this morning? If there are not, you may depend upon it we have nothing whatever to do with the covenant people of God. But it is my mercy to take up my Bible, and as I read portion after portion revealing

"Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding,"

electing love overcoming lost sinners, and redeeming mercy revealed in its power over the wayward and wandering children of God, I see, and feel, and know myself to be one with those who wander and waver, one with those who are oftentimes wanting and weary, one with those who are set before us by Jeremiah and Hosea under the name of Ephraim. Turn with me to Jer. xxxi. 18—20: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastened me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." But Ephraim's kind and indulgent God says: "Is Ephraim My dear son?" or, as it may read: "Ephraim is My dear son, he is a pleasant child; for, since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD." But who is Ephraim? God's child; but we are told he is a rebellious one, a wandering one, a wayward one, an obstinate one. Look at the description given of him throughout this book of Hosea. In the 2nd chap. we see him loved with an everlasting love. Here God declares His love to His people in the face of their manifold sins and wanderings from Him, in the view of which good old John Kent could sing so blessedly:

"Betroth'd in love, ere time began,  
His blood-bought bride with Jesus see;  
Made by eternal union ONE,  
Who was, and is, and is to be."

But look at her as she appears in this 2nd chapter. She is following after other lovers, seeking her pleasure and enjoyment everywhere and anywhere but in her God, her loving Husband. But He says: "I will hedge up thy way with thorns." Know ye anything about these thorns? I do. Terrible thorns in conviction and afflictive dispensations. If a thorn hedge is not sufficient, He says: "I will make a wall that she shall not find her paths." Is it not a marvellous mercy that, although we are determined to seek after other lovers, our first Husband—the Husband of the covenant before the worlds were framed—has declared that we shall not overtake them. Look at the allur-

ings of His love: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope." Look still further how the eternal espousals are manifested: "And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and Thou shalt know the LORD." But look at the description given of these people under the various names of Ephraim, Judah, Israel, and My people. Did you notice those words by Jeremiah: "Since I spake against him?" Where did God speak against him? In his conscience, by the convicting power of God the Holy Ghost. Turn to Hos. iv. 17: "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." I remember a sermon upon these words being put into my hands to read; and, though I hate to read the sermons of one who preaches free-grace in the morning, free-will in the evening, and can present a nauseous hash of both at noon, I read it. Ephraim's God was not found therein. It was an attempt to work upon the feelings of those whom the preacher considered to be the wicked wretches of his congregation. He spoke of this as having reference to obstinate sinners who despised God's word, rejected His Gospel, and sinned away their day of grace. Oh, what vile rubbish! This is the glorious truth of the text: "Ephraim, who is My dear son: Ephraim, who is My pleasant child; Ephraim, whom I love with an everlasting love: Ephraim, over whom My bowels yearn; Ephraim, for whom I have a home in My heart; Ephraim, for whom an eternal redemption waits; Ephraim, for whom covenant provision is prepared; Ephraim is joined to idols, and will have none of Me, but he can only go the length of his tether. He is Mine; let him alone. Where sin abounds in him, My grace shall much more abound. He may wander, but he cannot get beyond the sight of Mine eye, or the affection of My heart, while My long, strong, powerful arm of love shall bring him back to Myself, and he shall know that I am the LORD. With all your fleshly efforts, you cannot bring him back a moment before his time. You let My Ephraim alone, for your judging, threatening, and denouncing will affect him not. It is not by declamation and denunciation that My Ephraim shall be brought back to Me. Oh no! Let My Ephraim alone." My dear friends, we ought to be very careful as to the manner in which we speak of God's Ephraims.

The other day, one sitting near to me at this moment, stood with me by the door of a village smithy. The village blacksmith said a few things defaming the character of the late rector of the parish, who, I believe, is now in glory. I could not bear to hear it, and said, "You look here, if the dear man did all and more than you can say against him, I would sooner sin with him

than I would sing with you. Look at this blessed Book! Turn to Genesis ix. 20—27: Noah was drunk in his vineyard. His son Ham spread the report. His two sons Shem and Japheth took a garment and went backward and covered the shame of their father and would not see it. Was Noah drunk? Not in the estimation of his two lads, they would not see it. The shame of the old man was for ever hidden from their view. Noah's blessing rested upon the hidings of his sin, while his curse followed the bearer of the evil report. You think of this, and when you are tempted to speak of the old rector again may God stop your defaming mouth, with the conviction that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to the troublers and defamers of His people." Oh that we could remember this in our dealings one toward another.

But look still further at God's description of His Ephraim: "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from Me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committestest whoredom, and Israel is defiled." Listen again, "And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them." Where shall they fall? Not beneath the everlasting arms. They shall fall on the Rock and be broken in heart, while all the despisers of Ephraim shall be ground to powder by the Rock falling upon them. Again, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." That is me, say you. Bless God if you know it, for He cannot do too much for you. Listen again! "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people." And no wonder when you see the enemies of the Lord so obliging, accommodating, and liberal. "Ephraim is a cake not turned," not fit for either God or man. Look through the whole Book and then come to chapter xiv. 8: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" That is when God in Christ is revealed to him. God says, "I have heard him, and observed him." Ephraim says, "I am like a green fir tree." Some say the fir tree is our Lord Jesus Christ. I don't believe it. The fir tree bears no fruit, and according to Psalm civ. 17, it is the house of the stork. Now the stork was an unclean bird, a type of indwelling sin, that unclean tenant because of which every child of God laments. To such Christ says, "From Me is thy fruit found." O how comforting to the tempted child of God who looks within for some fair fruit of grace, but all is barrenness and death. He, by the grace of the Spirit, looks up to the presence of the Eternal where a precious Christ ever lives to make intercession for him, and from whom the fruits of righteousness abound to His own. God's wise and prudent ones understand and know these things. If we are of the number, we shall know something of the changes, desertions, and deliverances of Ephraim. We shall be broken in judgment

to be healed in mercy. We shall be killed feelingly to be made spiritually alive.

III.—**RIGHTEOUSNESS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THEM**—"For the ways of the LORD are right." There may be some of God's poor children here this morning who during the past week have been harassed with trouble, trial, disappointment, and dissatisfaction. Hopes cut off, prospects blighted, and the future as gloomy as death and the devil can make it. Well, the future belongs to God, and the present He claims as His own. In surveying the present and trying to pierce the gloom of the future, like Job we are filled with distress. Here the desire of the eye is taken away with a stroke, and yonder the bread winners are hurried out of time by terrible catastrophes, leaving behind them wives and little ones to mourn their loss. As we are led to see a gracious hand in all events we can say, "The ways of the LORD are right." Satan says, Nay. Grace says, Yea. I think I hear some poor old lady muttering, "It is all very well for you who can have a nicely provided table prepared for you, to say, 'The ways of the Lord are right;' but put yourself in my place without a crust in the cupboard or a penny in possession, with Satan tempting, nature doubting, and all things conspiring against you, will you say then, 'The ways of the Lord are right?'" Ah, my dear friend, with all the earthly comforts God can give me, I cannot say His ways are right but by the Holy Ghost.

IV.—**THE LOT OF THE JUST AND OF TRANSGRESSORS**—"And the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein." Yes, the just shall walk with Jesus in poverty, perplexity, persecution, desertion, darkness, and distress. He will uphold them while the transgressors shall fall there. The very same spot where judgment is displayed against the enemies of the Lord, there mercy is sweetly experienced by His children. You see this throughout that glorious Psalm cxxxvi., but it is so little understood. "But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endureth for ever." Mercy toward His own, judgment toward His adversaries. Loving-kindness and abounding grace revealed to those on whom His heart's affections have been fixed from the days of eternity; but eternal wrath and unmitigated vengeance upon all the enemies of His Christ and His people.

May He add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

END OF VOLUME III.









